

Hospitaller Women in the Middle Ages

Edited by
**Anthony Luttrell and
Helen J. Nicholson**



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HOSPITALLER WOMEN
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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Edited by

ANTHONY LUTTRELL
and
HELEN J. NICHOLSON

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List of Contributors

DR ALAN FOREY has taught in the Universities of Oxford, Saint Andrews and Durham, and is now retired. He has published extensively on the military orders. His publications include *The Military Orders from the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (1992), and his most recent book is *The Fall of the Templars in the Crown of Aragon* (2001).

PROF. LUIS GARCÍA-GUIJARRO RAMOS is Lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Zaragoza at Huesca. He has researched into various aspects of military and monastic orders in medieval Spain. His publications include *Papado, Cruzades y Órdenes Militares, siglos XI–XIII* (1995), a comparative analysis of the structure of the international military orders and of the role they played in the Latin Church.

PROF. PAULETTE L'HERMITE-LECLERCQ is retired. She was previously a professor at the Sorbonne and is an expert on women and spirituality.

DR ANTHONY LUTTRELL studied at Oxford, Madrid, Rome and Pisa, taught at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, Edinburgh, Malta and Padua, and was Assistant Director and Librarian of the British School at Rome. He works and publishes extensively on the Hospitallers of Rhodes, on medieval Malta, on the English in the Levant and on various archaeological projects.

DR JOHANNES A. MOL is Research Fellow at the Fryske Akademy in Leeuwarden and Professor in Frisian history at Leiden University. He publishes on the medieval history of the Frisian lands and on the Military Orders in the Netherlands. His major publications besides his dissertation on the Frisian houses of the Teutonic Order (1991), are an edition of medieval Frisian wills (*Friese testamenten tot 1550*, Leeuwarden 1994) and a study on the Premonstratensian abbey of Mariengarde, with an edition of the *Vitae abbatum Orti Sancte Marie*. He is currently finishing a book on monasteries and society in Friesland.

DR HELEN J. NICHOLSON is Reader in History at Cardiff University, Wales, and publishes on the military orders, crusades, and various related subjects. Her recent books include *Love, War and the Grail: Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights in Medieval Epic and Romance, 1150-1500* (2001) and *The Knights Hospitaller* (2001).

MYRA STRUCKMEYER has completed an M.Phil. thesis at Cambridge University on the Hospitaller sisters of Buckland. She is currently presenting a Ph.D. thesis at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, entitled 'Female Hospitallers in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in which she relates the history of the Order of Saint John to the history of female monasticism.

DR FRANCESCO TOMMASI teaches in the Department of History at the University of Perugia. He is a scholar of the Templars and has published extensively on this subject. He is also editor of the journal *Sacra Militia: Rivista di Storia degli Ordini Militari* (2000).

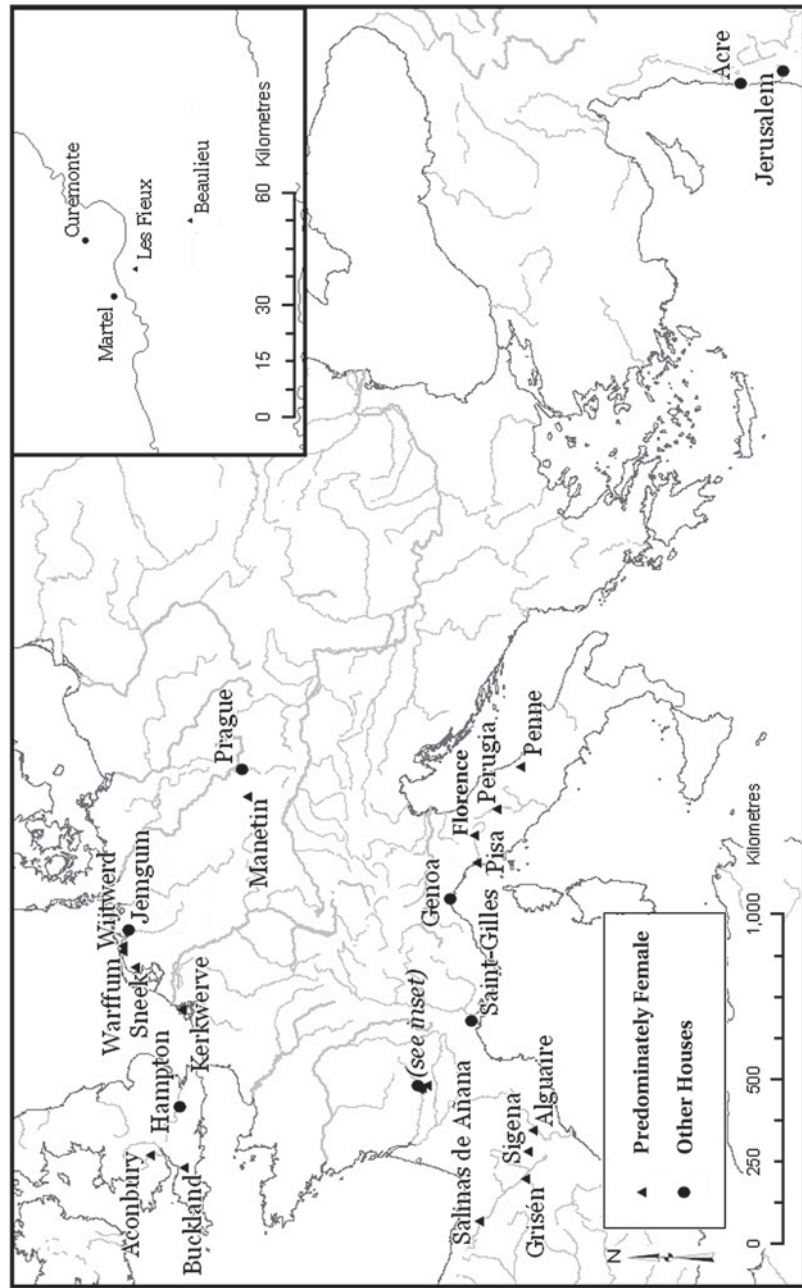
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List of Abbreviations

<i>CH</i>	<i>Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, 1100–1310</i> , ed. Joseph Delaville le Roulx, 4 vols (Paris, 1894–1906)
<i>CT</i>	<i>Cartulaire général de l'Ordre du Temple 1119?–1150. Recueil des chartes et des bulles relatives à l'ordre du Temple</i> , ed. Marquis d'Albon (Paris, 1913)
Fr	Frater
Larking and Kemble	<i>The Knights Hospitallers in England, Being the Report of Prior Philip de Thame to the Grandmaster Elyan de Villanova for AD 1338</i> , ed. Lambert B. Larking, intro. John Mitchell Kemble, Camden Society 1st series, 65 (1857)
Luttrell (1978)	<i>The Hospitallers in Cyprus, Rhodes, Greece and the West, 1291–1440</i> (London, 1978)
Luttrell (1982)	<i>Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the Crusades: 1291–1440</i> (London, 1982)
Luttrell (1992)	<i>The Hospitallers of Rhodes and their Mediterranean World</i> (Aldershot, 1992)
Luttrell (1999)	<i>The Hospitaller State on Rhodes and its Western Provinces: 1306–1462</i> (Aldershot, 1999)
Malta, Cod.	Valletta, National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, Codex
<i>MO</i> , 1	<i>The Military Orders: Fighting for the Faith and Caring for the Sick</i> , ed. Malcolm Barber (Aldershot, 1994)
<i>MO</i> , 2	<i>The Military Orders</i> , vol. 2: <i>Welfare and Warfare</i> , ed. Helen Nicholson (Aldershot, 1998)



A selection of the Hospitaller houses studied in this book

Preface

While this collection of articles is intended primarily as a contribution to the rapidly growing body of publication on the Hospitallers and on the military orders in general, it will also widen knowledge of a comparatively neglected area of female religious life. Hospitaller women have largely been ignored, as many scholars have concentrated on military, and therefore masculine, themes. However military orders were also religious orders and their women members were considerably more numerous than has generally been appreciated. They seldom participated in the Order's nursing or medical activities, but their role in promoting those family networks which brought the Hospital recruits, donations and family support is often overlooked. An understanding of its sisters will assist in defining the nature of the whole Order.

The contributions, republished and newly written, illustrate a variety of themes. An introductory chapter presents an overview of 'Hospitaller women'. Papers by Alan Forey and Francesco Tommasi place Hospitaller sisters within the context of women's participation in all the major military orders. The remainder of the chapters discuss detailed Hospitaller themes, arranged in chronological order of subject. This book is introductory rather than definitive. The topics covered and the sources and publications noted are in no way complete; some contradictions between the contributions are inevitable. No systematic attempt has been made explicitly to point out the errors and misunderstandings often repeated in the literature. Much work remains to be done, especially in the modern field which is excluded from the present studies.

All the contributions are now in English. The two papers by Francesco Tommasi have been translated from the Italian by Anthony Luttrell, and have been abridged and marginally revised. The paper by Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq was translated from the French by Helen J. Nicholson. Documents and appendices omitted from the papers by Francesco Tommasi can be found in the original publication. Items previously published have been reset with new paginations. The footnotes throughout provide a reasonably comprehensive bibliography for the whole subject, and the index of names and places includes all members and houses of the Hospital that are mentioned.

Important assistance came from Carlos Barquero Goñi, Carmen Berlabé, Pierre Bonneaud, Karl Borchardt, Lauri Corti, Cristina Dondi, Zsolt Hunyadi, Anne-Marie Legras, José María Pérez de las Heras, Josep Maria Sans i Travé, Ludovica Sebgondì, Anabel Thomas, Theresa Vann and all the contributors. The editors are

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The editors wish to thank the following for permission to reproduce the figures in this book: the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire of Geneva for the photograph on p. 19; the Museo Diocesà i Comarcal, Lleida, for the picture of Isabel de Aragón's box tomb (p. 40); the Society of Antiquaries of London for a page of the Buckland Psalter (p. 101); Nigel Nicholson for his photograph of Aconbury priory church (p. 157); and Professor Jos. Hermans of Groningen for the photograph from the Book of Hours on p. 188. The editors also thank Joan Fuguet Sans for providing the photographs of Sigena church (pp. 130 and 131) and Georges Dusserre of the Société de l'histoire et du patrimoine de l'Ordre de Malte for providing the two photographs of Beaulieu (pp. 216 and 219). Mark Davis, registrar at Taunton County Museum, gave valuable information on the surviving artefacts from Buckland. David Whitehead kindly permitted his plan of Aconbury priory to be redrawn and reproduced on p. 154. The editors also thank John Morgan of the School of History and Archaeology, Cardiff University, for producing prints for the figures on pp. 240 and 241.

Chapter 1

Introduction: a Survey of Hospitaller Women in the Middle Ages

Anthony Luttrell and Helen J. Nicholson

Hospitaller women have received little general study, although there was some early historical interest in the Order's female saints and there have been publications on individual houses, particularly on that at Sigena. In the early modern period a separate section of documents concerning the women's houses was created in the Hospital's central archives at Malta, but very little of that material dates from before 1522 when the Hospitallers lost Rhodes.¹ Some of the Order's European archives preserve very extensive records for certain houses, those from Sigena and Alguaire being especially rich. Many sources are indicated throughout this book and others doubtless await discovery; some non-Hospitaller archives, such as those of the Vatican or of the English and Aragonese crowns, also provide information on the sisters.

The pioneering study on the subject, first published in 1894, was a brief and in some ways misleading article by Joseph Delaville le Roulx.² The same author published a considerable number of documents concerning the sisters in his *Cartulaire* which ends in 1310; its introduction contained what is still the best general survey of the sources and of the bibliography as it then existed.³ Delaville's article is responsible for various frequently repeated misunderstandings or ambiguities, in particular that the Hospital 'created' a separate female 'branch' or 'parallel institution'; that sisters devoted to nursing the sick emigrated westwards after the fall of Jerusalem in 1187; that the women all followed the Rule of Saint Augustine and were Augustinian canonesses; and that the rule composed for Sigena was normally followed or adapted in other female houses. The women were full

¹ Valletta, National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Codices 1960–61, 1969–79, 1982, with details in *Catalogue of the Records of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the Royal Malta Library*, 13, ed. Joseph Mizzi (Malta, 1967), pp. 29–30, 33–50; these materials have not been exploited. For the modern period, Ġorġ Aquilina, *Is-Sorijiet Ġerosolimitani il Knisja u l Monasteru ta' Sant'Ursula*, Valletta (Malta, 2004)

² Joseph Delaville le Roulx, 'Les Hospitalières de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem', in his *Mélanges sur l'Ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1910), no. 12.

³ *CH*, 1, pp. ccxxii–ccxxx; the same ideas are repeated in Joseph Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et à Chypre: 1099–1310* (Paris, 1904), pp. 299–300.

members of the Hospital. They did not constitute a 'branch' of the Order, except in the sense that the priest-brethren, knights or sergeants each formed a separate branch. Some of the women, though by no means all, lived in female communities many of which had their own separate regulations, but there was no general rule for Hospitaller women.

Until recently most studies were dedicated to a particular house. In the late twentieth century came a growing interest in the subject, some of it reflected in the papers reprinted in this volume.⁴ In 1987 Lorenzo Tacchella published a brief innovative study of the Hospital's associated women members.⁵ Carlos Barquero Goñi has surveyed the Hispanic houses and provided a useful bibliography.⁶ The Hospitaller sisters have sometimes been mentioned in general works; for example, in studies of English monasticism, holy women, nunneries and hospitals.⁷ Elsewhere authors dealing with female religious have excluded Hospitaller women, in one case on the questionable grounds that 'their purposes were so different from those of traditional monasteries'.⁸ Yet in reality many students of female religious life deal with problems very similar to those facing any historian of Hospitaller women.

The subject suffers from terminological ambiguities, some of them frequent in the late-medieval sources themselves. Various forms of the word 'hospital' often indicated a hospice rather than a medical hospital; in western Europe for most of the medieval period there was no differentiation between the two terms. Fully professed members of the Hospital were religious. Those who were not priests, including of course fully professed women members, were technically lay religious or *religiosi laici*, yet the medieval documents often referred to female members of the Order

⁴ See also Anthony Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill, Hospitaller of Alguaire: 1415–1456', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 28 (1998), 219–49; *idem*, 'A Hospitaller Soror at Rhodes, 1347', in *Dei gesta per Francos: Études sur les croisades dédiées à Jean Richard – Crusade Studies in Honour of Jean Richard*, ed. Michel Balard, Benjamin Z. Kedar and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 129–43; Helen J. Nicholson, 'The Military Orders and their Relations with Women', in *The Crusades and the Military Orders: Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity*, ed. Zsolt Hunyadi and Józef Laszlovszky (Budapest, 2001), pp. 407–14; *idem*, 'Women in Templar and Hospitaller Commanderies', in *La Commanderie: Institution des Ordres Militaires dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Anthony Luttrell and Léon Pressouyre (Paris, 2002), pp. 125–34; Jürgen Sarnowsky, 'Gender-Aspekte in der Geschichte der geistlichen Ritterorden', in *Lebendige Sozialgeschichte: Gedenkschrift für Peter Borowsky* (Wiesbaden, 2003), pp. 168–88.

⁵ Lorenzo Tacchella, *Le 'Donate' nella Storia del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta* (Verona, 1987).

⁶ Carlos Barquero Goñi, *Los Caballeros Hospitalarios en España durante la Edad Media (siglos XII–XV)* (Burgos, 2003), pp. 205–20.

⁷ For example, Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain: 1000–1300* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 106; Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries After the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 50–52, 156–7.

⁸ Bruce Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (Ithaca, 1977), p. 179 n. 29.

who owed obedience but were not fully professed as ‘sister’ or ‘lay sister’. It is therefore sometimes impossible to be sure when or whether *soror*, sister, or *soror laica*, lay sister, meant a fully professed sister, or merely a person who had ‘given’ herself to the Order as a donat or as some other associate, often under a limited form of obedience undertaken through a simple type of vow of profession. Historians of many orders still refer indiscriminately to donats, *converse*, *oblade* and other women associates as lay sisters. *Conсорores* differed from donats in that they did not reside in a house of the Hospital or wear its habit but were assured of burial in the habit and of posthumous commemoration in a community’s prayers. Confusingly, *conсорores* could also mean ‘fellow sisters’ in the sense of the community of fully professed women within a religious house, but the term is used here in the stricter sense of a particular type of associate sister.

In the West the Hospital’s standard administrative unit was the priory, in which a prior ruled over a number of houses known as commanderies, preceptories or, sometimes, as convents. Except in a house governed by a commander who was himself a priest, the senior priest-brother was also frequently entitled *prior*; the houses in Frisia, however, provided exceptions to that rule. The precise arrangements under which women fitted into the Order always defied tidy classification. Many works, including some published below, divide female houses into ‘mixed’ and ‘double’ houses, as in other non-military orders, but these categories were not formally or explicitly recognized in the later Middle Ages and do not necessarily fit the realities of that period.

With exceptions, especially in Frisia, there were three main ways in which a fully professed sister could live as a Hospitaller. She could be a full sister within an independent female convent with its own variously titled superior and its own officers, constitutions, privileges, possessions and incomes. Alternatively, a woman could be part of a recognizable group of sisters with their own hierarchy who lived within or close by a male house under a male commander who was their superior; their incomes and various other arrangements would be those of the commandery. Thirdly, one or more fully professed sisters could live in a male commandery as part of its community.

Hospitaller Women in the Latin East

During the eleventh century the Latin West experienced a massive surge of religious enthusiasm which manifested itself in papal reform, in new types of monastic foundations, in a special emphasis on service to the poor and the sick which led to the creation of hospitals and other charitable bodies, and finally in the crusade. Many of these changes involved the laity, women as well as men, in a search of practical and active spiritual models outside traditional forms of monasticism. Women of varying backgrounds participated in these activities and were especially prominent as aspirants to places in both male and female monasteries. During the

twelfth century the growth of the crusading movement was accompanied by the emergence of military-religious orders devoted to the holy war against the infidel, a development in which women sought their own place.

The military orders evolved as part of the crusading movement, beginning with the Temple, which was founded in Jerusalem in 1120 to oppose the Muslims and to defend Christian pilgrims against them. The Templars were followed by the Order of Saint John, a charitable hospitaller institution which was gradually militarized during the twelfth century, and eventually by the Teutonic Order and by a number of 'national' orders, many of them linked to the reconquest of the Hispanic peninsula. A military order was a religious order of the Latin Church. It functioned outside the secular hierarchy of cardinals, bishops and priests, and was largely exempt from episcopal control; it depended directly on the papacy which normally confirmed its Rule and granted it privileges. Its brethren were not monks living within an enclosed community dedicated to prayer but, like monks, they were fully professed religious who took the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Precise definitions emerged only gradually in the course of the twelfth century. Apart from their priest-brethren, fully professed members of a military order were regarded in canon law as *religiosi laici* or lay religious who enjoyed extensive exemptions as one of a variety of groups characterized juridically as ecclesiastical persons. As such, Hospitallers lived a communal liturgical life based on the canonical hours of prayer but they were primarily dedicated to a holy war which was to be conducted exclusively against infidels. They participated in many crusades but not in those launched against fellow Christians, whether they were schismatics, heretics or simply Latin enemies of the Church. Technically, however, Hospitallers were not crusaders, since they were explicitly forbidden to take the crusading vow. Their holy war was a perpetual one and not the occasional and limited holy war of the crusade which depended on a specific papal proclamation. The Hospitallers' warrior function, which involved ecclesiastical acceptance of the violence implicit in the killing of opponents by fully professed religious, provoked some unease but gradually it was justified and accepted.⁹

It may seem curious that women could enter a military-religious order in which they did not fight, even if they supported its objectives in other ways, although the Order's priests, and indeed many of its sergeants and serving brethren, were also non-combatants. Given contemporary taboos against women in combat, there was no exclusively female military order. Yet holy war and crusade were devotional and penitential as well as military in character. Women could live in proximity to holy

⁹ Anthony Luttrell, 'The Military Orders: Some Definitions', in *Militia Sancti Sepulcri: Idea e Istituzioni*, ed. Kaspar Elm and Cosimo Damiano Fonseca (Vatican, 1998), pp. 78–88; *idem*, 'The Military Orders: Further Definitions', *Sacra Militia*, 1 (2000), 7–12; see also Giles Constable, 'The Place of the Crusader in Medieval Society', *Viator*, 29 (1998), 392–403; James Brundage, 'Crusades, Clerics and Violence: Reflections on a Canonical Theme', in *The Experience of Crusading*, 1: *Western Approaches*, ed. Marcus Bull and Norman Housley (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 152–6.

warfare, especially in Spain. They did sometimes fight against the infidel and they could technically be crusaders;¹⁰ in 1301 Pope Boniface VIII endorsed an abortive project by a group of Genoese noblewomen to sponsor a crusading expedition in which some of them planned to participate.¹¹ The Hospitaller sisters' canonical status did in some ways differ from that of the male members, although their reception and discipline and the rules they followed were largely similar. Some of the women were like nuns in so far as they lived in *clausura*, literally 'enclosure', and their function was primarily liturgical; they could advance the cause of their order against the Muslims by prayer, itself a non-military form of militancy, and by raising funds but, unlike some of the men, they could not benefit penitentially through military acts. The women's juridical situation was regulated by a body of canonical decisions, as was also generally true of female groups attached to non-military religious orders.¹² The various military orders adopted different attitudes towards female membership, points discussed by Alan Forey and Francesco Tommasi in this volume. There were general suspicions regarding the dangers to morals and morale of allowing women in male orders, and the Templars sought, although with some exceptions, to exclude women, but the Hospitallers accepted a variety of forms of female membership, as did the Teutonic brethren and those of the Order of Calatrava. The Order of Santiago not only included fully professed women but allowed its fully professed brethren and sisters to be married according to a vow of conjugal chastity. This led to the curious arrangements for the upbringing and inheritances of the children, and even to women being asked on their reception if they wished to be found a husband; the papacy thus accepted the existence of married religious.¹³

¹⁰ Helen J. Nicholson, 'Women on the Third Crusade', *Journal of Medieval History*, 23 (1997), 335–49; *Gendering the Crusades*, ed. Susan Edgington and Sarah Lambert (Cardiff, 2001), especially articles by Matthew Bennett, Michael R. Evans and Constance M. Rousseau.

¹¹ Anthony Luttrell, 'Englishwomen as Pilgrims to Jerusalem: Isolda Parewastell, 1365', in *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Bolton Holloway et al. (New York, 1990), p. 187, citing texts in *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, ed. Georges A. L. Digard et al., 3 (Paris, 1921), pp. 290–94.

¹² Micheline de Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'Age classique du Droit Canon: Recherches sur les Structures juridiques des Branches féminines des Ordres* (Paris, 1967).

¹³ Forey, Chapter 2; Tommasi, Chapter 3; Rafael Sánchez Domingo, *Las Monjas de la Orden Militar de Calatrava: Monasterio de San Felices (Burgos) y de la Concepción (Moralzarzal-Madrid)* (Burgos, 1997); Carlos de Ayala Martínez, *Las Órdenes Militares Hispánicas en la Edad Media (siglos XII–XV)* (Madrid, 2003), pp. 176–95. The Order of Saint Lazarus, apparently, had no fully professed sisters: Rafaël Hyacinthe, *L'Ordre de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem au Moyen Age* (Millau, 2003), p. 76; but see Kay Peter Jankrift, *Leopros als Streiter Gottes: Institutionalisierung und Organisation des Ordens vom Heiligen Lazarus zu Jerusalem von seinen Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1350* (Münster, 1996), pp. 107–8; David Marcombe, *Leper Knights: The Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem in England, c. 1150–1544* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 19–20, 166.

The earliest women members of what eventually became the Order of the Hospital did not belong to a military institution but to a Latin monastery in Jerusalem. In about 1070, some 25 years before the crusade was initiated, a hospice or hospital for Latin pilgrims was founded and supported by a group of merchants from Amalfi. It was attached to the Benedictine monastery of Sancta Maria Latina and its carers followed 'an almost religious life', maybe under some sort of Benedictine discipline, perhaps as *conversi* owing a simple form of obedience. The hospice presumably sheltered pilgrims and paupers of both sexes, and its personnel, possibly western pilgrims who decided to remain in the East, may well have included women. At some point a small female house dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene was set up, perhaps to achieve a degree of separation of the sexes; its sisters reportedly cared for the female pilgrims. Before 1099 this house had a superior named Agnes, possibly an Italian since she was described much later as 'a noble' and a 'Roman matron'. However, following the Latins' capture of Jerusalem in that year the female house under Agnes ceased to act as a hospice. It became a non-Hospitalier Latin nunnery and changed its name to Saint Mary Major, apparently retaining no connection with the previously all-male hospital even though the two houses were separated only by a road that ran between them.¹⁴

After 1099 the male hospital under its founder Giraldus distanced itself from its dependence on the Benedictines of Sancta Maria Latina and became closely associated with the Holy Sepulchre and its newly established Augustinian canons. This freedom from Benedictine regulations may have encouraged the regrouping of charitable operations into a single house in which it would have been logistically more convenient to treat both sexes together. The rapidly expanding Jerusalem hospital received papal approval in 1113 and became a flourishing and highly organized charitable institution which provided many beds and doctors, reportedly

¹⁴ Tommasi, Chapter 3, pp. 71–2; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St John in Jerusalem and Cyprus: c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), pp. 33–7; Rudolf Hiestand, 'Die Anfänge der Johanniter', in *Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein and Manfred Hellmann (Sigmaringen, 1980), pp. 35–8; Anthony Luttrell, 'The Earliest Hospitaliers', in *Montjoie: Studies in Crusade History in Honour of Hans Eberhard Mayer*, ed. Benjamin Kedar et al. (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 37–54; Alain Beltjens, *Aux Origines de l'Ordre de Malte: de la Fondation de l'Hôpital de Jérusalem à sa Transformation en Ordre Militaire* (Brussels, 1995), pp. 59–63 (map p. 74). Writing between 1219 and 1240, Jacques de Vitry (text in Beltjens, pp. 420–21), claimed that the women were *sorores mulieres religiose* who actually served in the women's hospital; he seems to indicate that it was after 1099 that Agnes took the same rule and vowed herself to the same *humilitatis habitum* as the solemn rule and regular habit taken by Giraldus. This is accepted by Beltjens, pp. 63, 118, who considers Agnes as 'the founder of the women Hospitaliers' and, without further evidence, that the women Hospitaliers followed the Benedictine Rule and continued a 'charitable mission' until 1187. It is not clear what regulations the Hospitaliers followed before the Rule was confirmed between 1145 and 1153: Anthony Luttrell, 'The Hospitaliers' Early Written Records', in *The Crusades and their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. John France and William Zajac (Aldershot, 1998), p. 147.

housing 2000 patients of both sexes; much of the nursing was done by men but women did play some part.¹⁵ A description of the great hospital written shortly before 1187 mentioned a separate *palacium* with wards for women, a gynaecological section and its own kitchen. The hospital cared for foundlings who were farmed out to salaried wet nurses, who had to bring the babies to the hospital for periodic checks by the *sorores domus*. Carrying food to the sick from the kitchens was done by 'the brethren and sisters and by noble pilgrims'; these last, apparently performing a temporary service *ad terminum*, possibly included women. The description spoke of honest, mature women, sisters of widowly chastity defined as *sorores* and *religiose*.¹⁶ There seem therefore to have been certain fully professed sisters, while other women may have been donats.

The Order's brief general Rule, probably written down between about 1130 and 1153, emphasized its members' overriding obligation to the poor and the sick but made no mention of women members; nor was there ever any explicit hint of a separate Hospitaller female house or community in crusader Jerusalem. The Rule did insist that when brethren were outside their house they should travel in groups of two or three and that they should take care for their virtue in the presence of women, who were not to wash the men's hair or feet or to make their beds.¹⁷ A fourteenth-century writer reported that the founder of the German hospice of Sancta Maria Alamannorum, which was located some way from the main hospital but was placed under the overall direction of the Master of the Hospital in 1143, had a wife who founded there a separate hospice for women.¹⁸ The German complex was in fact sufficiently extensive to provide an exclusively female ward; the church had an upper storey and a crypt with buildings on either side of it, those to the north being built around a courtyard.¹⁹

Jerusalem fell to the Muslims in 1187 and, when a few years later the Hospitallers established their headquarters at Acre, there may have been some sisters from Jerusalem in the new capital of the Latin kingdom. By that time, however, there was in general a growing trend for the physical separation of male and female religious, while within the Hospital the status of the brethren changed as the Order was gradually transformed during the mid twelfth century into a predominantly military rather than a charitable body. One eventual result was a division of the non-priest brethren into a class of socially superior *milites* or knight-brethren and another of sergeants who came from lower social classes.

¹⁵ *Idem*, 'The Hospitallers' Medical Tradition: 1291–1530', in *MO*, 1, pp. 64–7.

¹⁶ 'Sunt namque in hospitali sorores matrone in diebus processive, viduali continentia, honestate mulieres religiose': Benjamin Kedar, 'A Twelfth-Century Description of the Jerusalem Hospital', in *MO*, 2, pp. 4–8, 20, 23–5.

¹⁷ *CH*, no. 70, section 4.

¹⁸ Tommasi, Chapter 3, pp. 73–4.

¹⁹ Detail and plan in Adrian Boas, *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades: Society, Landscape and Art in the Holy City under Frankish Rule* (London, 2001), pp. 89–90, 125–7.

The fully professed sisters needed to be able to afford some kind of 'dowry' or entrance payment. They took the same three vows of religion and followed the same rule as the men. Those Hospitaller women who were in a separate female community were often required to be 'literate' at least to the extent required by their liturgical function of prayer. Professed sisters of this type were confined within a convent in *clausura*, in which their position was broadly similar to that of nuns. There was no female equivalent of the fully professed male sergeant of a lower social grade, although there came to be a division between 'literate' donats or novices and other women donats of more humble origin.

The women carers in the new Conventual hospital at Acre may have been similar in status to those women who had served in Jerusalem, but by 1219 there was already somewhere in the new capital a separate 'house of the Hospital in which live sisters of the Hospital'.²⁰ In 1256 the pope granted the Hospital the very extensive possessions of the Benedictine sisters of Saint Lazarus at Bethany which, so the Hospitallers claimed, had largely been destroyed; when the existing sisters, who had moved to Acre, died or departed they were to be replaced by religious women of the Hospitaller Order living 'under the Rule of the Hospital'. The Patriarch of Jerusalem opposed this change, which involved more than 50 nuns of Saint Lazarus whose house was some way east of the main Hospitaller complex at Acre, and when in 1261 he became pope, as Urban IV, he quashed the arrangement.²¹

A mid-thirteenth-century version of the fictional *Chanson de Jérusalem* told how Beatrice, a daughter of King Baldwin I of Jerusalem, was violated while a hostage in Muslim hands and, unable to make a noble marriage, she retired into the Hospital at Acre, her father giving the Order the castle at Sidon as her dowry. Supposedly her twice-widowed sister Ida subsequently joined her there, her two deceased husbands being buried in the Hospital.²² Had a daughter of Baldwin I or Baldwin II really entered the Order she would presumably have done so before 1187 in Jerusalem, but the scenario of unmarried, unmarriageable or widowed princesses becoming Hospitallers was not unconvincing. Baldwin I's daughter Iveta and her elder sister Queen Melisende had in fact founded the house of Saint Lazarus at Bethany where Iveta was abbess in 1144;²³ the *Chanson* may well therefore have confused Saint Lazarus at Bethany, the community which had moved to Acre and had briefly been incorporated into the Hospital, with the Order's main hospital in Acre. Another story recounted in about 1335 by the Castilian magnate Juan Manuel described how, perhaps in about 1275, a woman found dead in the hospital at Acre held in her hand a writing saying that she was the Infanta Sancha, the daughter of Jaime I of Aragon,

²⁰ CH, no. 1656.

²¹ CH, nos 2781, 2925, 2927, 2929, 2993; Riley-Smith, pp. 401–3; Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: a Corpus*, 1 (Cambridge, 1993), p. 124.

²² Analysis in Helen J. Nicholson, *Love, War and the Grail: Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights in Medieval Epic and Romance, 1150–1500* (Leiden, 2001), p. 44.

²³ Pringle, p. 123.

and that she had been serving anonymously in the *ospital de Acre*. Since Juan Manuel was Sancha's nephew and he himself married two members of the house of Aragon, his information could have been reliable and, discounting the miracles which embellished the report, Sancha may well have been a royal carer in the hospital.²⁴

On Cyprus an agreement of 1255 accepted that the commander and the *fratres et mulieres familiares* – presumably meaning the brethren and the women associates of the Hospital's church in Nicosia – would be subject to the jurisdiction of the archbishop, but it seems unlikely that these *mulieres familiares* were fully professed sisters.²⁵ Some Hospitaller women may have been evacuated from Acre when it fell in 1291 but there were no further female communities in the East. There was no such house on Rhodes, where there were only a few rare cases of individual female donats or *consorores*; one was possibly the *soror* Margaret of Negroponte who, with her daughter Simona who was perhaps also a donat or *consoror*, was engaged in charitable activities in the town in about 1345 (fig. 1.1), and another, some time before 1432, was the Sienese Nicoletta Cibo who was also a *soror* on Rhodes.²⁶ There were few noble Latin families established on the island that might have encouraged the foundation of a female house there, while the women's main function of prayer could be carried out in the West. If there were female nurses in the great conventual hospital on Rhodes they were presumably not fully professed sisters but women such as, for example, the Hungarian slave Helena who in 1414 was freed in return for her services to the sick in that hospital.²⁷

Hospitaller Women in the West

After 1291 western women who became Hospitallers remained in the West. The presence in male houses of individual women, fully professed or otherwise, was not always reflected in the written texts, especially in cases in which women were

²⁴ Nikolas Jaspert, 'Heresy and Holiness in a Mediterranean Dynasty: The House of Barcelona in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers: Trade, Politics and Religion, 650–1450*, ed. Dionisius Agius and Ian Netton (Turnhout, 1997), pp. 107–13; Martí de Riquer, *Llegendes Històriques Catalanes* (Barcelona, 2000), pp. 105–14. In 1275 Sancha's remains and those of her mother were supposedly transferred to the Cistercian monastery at Vallbona in Catalonia, but the evidence is conflicting: *El 'Llibre Verd' del Pare Jaume Pascual: Primera Història del Monestir de Vallbona*, ed. Josep Maria Sans i Travé (Barcelona, 2002), pp. 106–12, 161. A fourteenth-century ritual, dating after 1328, recorded the translation of Sancha and her mother Violante on 23 October 1275: José Jannini, 'Los Manuscritos del Monasterio de Vallbona (Lérida)', *Hispania Sacra*, 15 (1962), 441.

²⁵ CH, no. 2762.

²⁶ Luttrell, 'Hospitaller Soror', pp. 133–6; *idem*, *Rhodes Town: 1306–1356* (Rhodes, 2003), pp. 46, 151, 241–3.

²⁷ *Idem*, 'Slavery at Rhodes: 1306–1440', in Luttrell (1982), no. VI, p. 98.



Fig. 1.1 Fragment of a fourteenth-century tomb slab from Rhodes showing two female figures, possibly Hospitaller donats

legally unacceptable as witnesses and were not therefore listed in formal documents. When female houses were set up the motives behind their foundation varied considerably, as did their composition and their arrangements. Many houses, although by no means all, were founded by royal or noble women acting alone: examples include Sigena in Aragon and Aconbury in England, discussed by Luis García-Guijarro Ramos and Helen J. Nicholson in this volume. Some houses existed as Hospitaller convents for only a brief period, as at Manetin in Bohemia, at Aconbury in England and at Monteleone in Umbria. In some cases, at Pisa for example, an existing women's community was transferred to the Hospital.

The women were assimilated into a system in which brethren were generally assigned residence in a commandery in which some of them were prepared for

service in the East and in which they were expected to create a surplus of wealth to send as responsions and other dues to support the convent in Syria or, later, on Rhodes. The system developed gradually, the earliest commanderies being established on properties in the West being donated to the hospital in Jerusalem. At what stage the Hospital would have been considered as a religious order in a formal canonical sense was an obscure matter, not clearly defined in the twelfth century during which the concept of a religious order was itself still evolving.²⁸ Equally there may at first have been little or no clear distinction between a fully professed religious and an *obediencialis*, a Hospitaller donat under a simple vow of obedience.

Both male and female Hospitaller houses contained varying numbers of women who were not fully professed, although they were often described as sisters; the Order's fourteenth-century statutes did mention them.²⁹ Some might be young novices being educated for eventual full profession as *moniales*, literally nuns. The *conсорores*, who sought burial in the Order's habit and posthumous prayers for their souls, did not usually reside in a house of the Order. Donats were of various types; some were noble novices awaiting reception in a female house while others might have a life-rent or annuity. There were other kinds of female presence in many male commanderies, possibly as partners in a married couple or as widows, perhaps with a contract assuring them food and shelter, sometimes with the option of taking full vows on the death of a husband. In 1373 the commandery at Arbois near Besançon housed a priest-brother aged 60, his 20-year-old nephew who was also a Hospitaller, a female servant aged 50 and a girl of ten.³⁰ There were women servants, and women or married couples might have charge of a hospice, as in the case of the *factrix* named *soror* Margarita at San Giovanni near Viterbo in about 1341³¹ or in the hospices at Santa Caterina in Venice and elsewhere.³² In 1370 the Aragonese commandery at Ambel included a woman 'to clean the house' and another to manage the baking.³³ Some Provençal houses paid women and girls, as many as

²⁸ Florent Cygler, 'Un Ordre Cistercien au XIIe siècle? mythe historique ou mystification historiographique', *Revue Mabillon*, 74 (2002).

²⁹ Nicholson, 'Women in Templar and Hospitaller Commanderies', pp. 129–32; Anne-Marie Legras, 'Les Effectifs de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem dans la Prieuré de France en 1373', *Revue Mabillon*, 60 (1984), 373–83; Charles de Miramon, *Les 'donnés' au Moyen Âge: une forme de vie religieuse laïque: v. 1180–v. 1500* (Paris, 1999), pp. 87–8, 132–3, 324–32.

³⁰ Anthony Luttrell, 'The Spiritual Life of the Hospitallers of Rhodes', in Luttrell (1999), no. IX.

³¹ Thomas Frank, 'Der Deutsche Orden in Viterbo (13.–15. Jahrhundert)', in *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Franz Felten and Nikolas Jaspert (Berlin, 1999), p. 335 n. 50.

³² Anthony Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers' Hospice of Santa Caterina at Venice: 1358–1451', in Luttrell (1978), no. IX.

³³ Anthony Luttrell, 'The Structure of the Aragonese Hospital, 1349–1352', in Luttrell (1999), no. XIII, p. 319.

30 at a time at Montélimar in 1338, as agricultural workers,³⁴ and in the same year laundresses were doing what was regarded as women's work for a wage at various English male commanderies.³⁵ At Bajoles in Roussillon in 1376 there was a 'chamber where the woman sleeps'.³⁶ At Florence humble women were accepted with smaller dowries as donats to work as servants: in 1463 the daughter of a peasant in the sisters' service was received to serve in the kitchen, in a ceremony at which a mass was sung in the presence of two Hospitaller brethren and many of her family members.³⁷

The Foundation of Houses in the West

There was no obvious connection between the fall of Jerusalem and the foundation of female houses in the West, and no sign that any women Hospitallers from Jerusalem retreated westwards after 1187.³⁸ In fact, individual women were attached to Hospitaller houses in Europe before the foundation of exclusively female communities or houses in the 1180s. Some of these *sorores* were not fully professed sisters. A married couple became donats of some sort at Cervera in Catalonia, apparently as early as 1111. When Adalis, a widow who had been received at Trinquetaille in Languedoc, died in the Jerusalem hospital, probably after 1146, she confirmed the donations she had promised.³⁹ In 1177 at Alpeñés near Zaragoza a widow named Juliana gave herself and her son Simon, together with lands and money, to God, to Saint John and to the poor of the Hospital at Jerusalem; apparently they were donats. Simon was to be under obedience to the Hospitallers, to live where they ordered him to, and to receive the same allocations of food and dress as did those brethren. Juliana and Simon would participate 'in every benefit of the hospital of Jerusalem', apparently that was in burial and commemoration; Simon would, however, live with his mother and wear what dress he pleased – which presumably meant he would not wear the Hospitaller habit – while she was alive, and would retain the incomes from his properties until his death. Other women were apparently

³⁴ Benoit Beaucage, *Visites générales des commanderies de l'ordre des Hospitaliers dépendantes du grand prieuré de Saint-Gilles: 1338* (Aix, 1982), pp. 70–71 *et passim*.

³⁵ Nicholson, 'Women in Templar and Hospitaller Commanderies', pp. 131–2.

³⁶ Joaquim Miret y Sans, *Les Cases de Templers y Hospitalers en Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1910), pp. 560–61.

³⁷ Enrica Viviani Della Robbia, *Nei Monasteri Fiorentini* (Florence, 1946), p. 123; Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, p. 43.

³⁸ Delaville, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte*, p. 299, states, inaccurately, 'Si, après la prise de Jérusalem par Saladin (1187), les Hospitalières se réfugièrent en Occident, elles trouvèrent, dans presque tous les prieurés, un asile dans des monastères de femmes déjà constitués, ou au moins dans les maisons qui abritaient concurremment des soeurs et des frères de leur ordre.'

³⁹ CH, nos 22, 141.

fully professed sisters. In 1177 Alfonso II of Aragon gave the castle at Grisén near Zaragoza to a number of named Hospitallers, who included a *domina* Mayor, for the foundation of a female house there, which is considered below by García-Guijarro Ramos. In that year Mayor was a *priorissa* acting alongside male Hospitallers and at least three *sorores*. In 1240 and 1253 there was a female *commendatrix* at Grisén.⁴⁰

Far away in Bohemia there was another early house. In about 1180 the noble knight Petrus took the Hospital's habit together with his mother, his wife, his maternal aunt and a niece, making his vows to Bernardus, Prior of Bohemia, in front of the cathedral at Prague and giving the Order all his hereditary possessions. At Petrus's request, the prior built a monastery for these women at Manetin, where in 1182 the pope confirmed the possession of an *ecclesia*, presumably a convent or the church of a convent in which Hospitaller sisters lived; these were to be under the prior's jurisdiction and were to admit no *soror* or *frater* without his permission, while the prior was to appoint a Hospitaller brother as *provisor* or procurator. The house did not survive for long. Petrus went to Jerusalem and was killed by the infidel, after which his mother received some ten new sisters without licence and replaced the *frater procurator*, managing the house through laymen; Petrus's widow was removed from the house by her father and remarried after abandoning her vows. The sisters were subsequently moved to lead a common life in an enclosed area attached to the prioral church, presumably in Prague. Petrus' mother then borrowed 30 marks from the Hospitallers and set off, she claimed, to serve God in Jerusalem, but on reaching Hungary she returned to Bohemia and, with her son Milhost, began to dissipate the Hospital's possessions, allegedly causing 250 marks of damages. She then entered another monastery, swearing to respect the Hospital's properties. Absolved of her vows, 'a cruce taliter absoluta', Petrus's mother was able to transfer 15 villages to the brethren of the Holy Sepulchre. Subsequently papal commissioners instructed that she be returned to her original Hospitaller profession. Eventually in 1194 the villages which Petrus had given to the Order were divided between his brother Milhost and the Hospital, which was not however to be obliged to fulfil its undertaking to build a *claustrum*, presumably the enclosed house earlier intended for the women.⁴¹ The sisters soon disappeared. In 1257 the *magistra* and *sorores* of the *ecclesia* at Světec in northern Bohemia refused to obey the Hospitallers, claiming that although they had for a time worn the Order's *signum*, presumably the cross, they were not professed in the Hospital.⁴² Whether or not they lived in community, took vows or followed a rule, these women were presumably seeking to enjoy religious privileges without incurring obedience or obligations,

⁴⁰ García-Guijarro Ramos, Chapter 5, pp. 115–16; Miret y Sans, *Les Cases de Templiers y Hospitalers*, pp. 220–21; María Luisa Ledesma Rubio, *La Encomienda de Zaragoza de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén en los Siglos XII y XIII* (Zaragoza, 1967), pp. 109, 218–19, 222–5, 510. The sisters from Grisén may have moved to nearby Sigena in 1187.

⁴¹ CH, nos 643, 861, 913, 921, 959.

⁴² CH, no. 2870.

as was quite common. Thereafter there were, apparently, no fully professed Hospitaller sisters in the Priory of Bohemia.⁴³

As described below by Myra Struckmeyer, in about 1185 eight professed sisters living in six different English commanderies were moved to a house at Mynchin Buckland in Somerset. This was established with the support of King Henry II, who wished to segregate the women. A male commandery was set up alongside the sisters and managed their estates, but the women did not choose the commander. The women's house survived until the Protestant dissolution of 1539, when there were still 13 sisters.⁴⁴ In 1227 there were, briefly at least, some *sorores*, possibly donats, in the male commandery at Hampton in Middlesex.⁴⁵ There was also a short-lived house founded at Aconbury in Herefordshire in 1216, described below by Nicholson. In about 1230 the Hospitallers, in economic difficulties in the East, may have pressed the sisters too determinedly for money and have attempted to impose a new prioress; the founder, Margaret de Lacy, tried to act as prioress and to retake control of her own foundation. After prolonged litigation the Hospitallers lost the house.⁴⁶

A very different situation arose in Eastern Aragon, at Sigena, on the site of an existing male commandery, where in about 1184 Queen Sancha initiated a royal foundation. An agreement of 1187 sought to avoid disputes such as that at Aconbury, and in 1188 the Order confirmed detailed regulations governing the convent's life. As described below by García-Guijarro Ramos, all the Hospital's sisters in the Castellany of Amposta were to be able to live there under the Castellan's superior jurisdiction, to elect their prioress and to choose new sisters and their male commander; the prioress was to attend the Castellan's chapter and pay annual responsions. Sigena housed noble widows and less exalted women among its buildings, frescoes and other artistic works of high quality.⁴⁷ There were also

⁴³ No *soror* appeared in the extensive Bohemian inquest of 1373: Václav Novotný, 'Inquisitio Domorum Hospitalis S. Johannis Hierosolimitani per Pragensem Archidioesim Facto anno 1373', *Historiky Archiv*, 19 (1901); nor have any been found in the Hospital's archives in Prague or elsewhere.

⁴⁴ Struckmeyer, Chapter 4. The figure of 50 *sorores portantes habitum hospitalariorum* given in the 1338 report (Larking and Kemble, p. 19), has always been accepted, but although the text (Malta, Cod. 2191, fol. 8v), shows 'L', this may have been an error for 'X', made in copying information gathered locally into the lengthy text sent to Rhodes. The sisters' buildings seem to have been relatively modest, as do their entrance payments (Struckmeyer, Chapter 4, pp. 103–8). The original endowment was for nine sisters and there were 13 in 1539. The incomes reported in 1338 (*ibid.*, p. 106) would scarcely have maintained 50 women. The matter requires detailed consideration.

⁴⁵ CH, no. 1858: 'domus in qua manent sorores ordinis Hospitalis'.

⁴⁶ Nicholson, Chapter 6.

⁴⁷ Sigena's extensive history and rich documentation cannot fully be reflected in this volume; for the origins and bibliography, below, pp. 37–41; and García-Guijarro, Chapter 5.

aristocratic girls such as Constance, daughter of the Count of Foix, who was being educated there 'in secular habit' in 1285.⁴⁸

In Catalonia too there were female donats, *consorores* and fully professed sisters. In 1192 Ermessendis de Biosca was a *soror* in the male house of Cervera, where in 1245 a noble widow, Marquesa de la Guàrdia, endowed the house extensively with family monies and possessions and created a female presence with six other fully professed sisters. In 1248 Marquesa, the *comendatrix* at Cervera, where the house was to owe 80 *morabatinos* a year as responsions, agreed with her daughter Gueralda and the five other sisters that Gueralda should be her successor. In 1250 Marquesa, Gueralda and two other sisters travelled to the Hospitaller chapter at Huesca and secured permission to move to an exclusively female house that they were to construct at Alguaire, to which they transferred many valuable endowments from Cervera. According to the constitutions established in 1250, the sisters were to be subject to the Castellan of Amposta and to the brethren, who might correct the prioress if she did not follow the Hospital's Rule and customs. The sisters were to elect, and the Castellan to confirm, their prioress; they were not to receive women or men without the Castellan's licence; the Castellan could not impose officials and was bound to provide a male commander who was to be chosen by the sisters, and he was to assist them in time of difficulty; the prioress was to attend the Castellan's chapter and, after the first eight years, to pay him a tenth of Alguaire's incomes. In 1252 Marquesa was *comendatrix* of both Cervera and Alguaire with a male lieutenant at Cervera, where there continued to be a commandery; in 1254 Gueralda was *priora* at Alguaire; and in 1266 there was a male *prior*, probably as chaplain, at Alguaire. In the manner of Queen Sancha at Sigena, Marquesa continued to act in secular affairs, controversially granting family castles and properties to the Hospital and eventually retiring from the house; she received a life pension with the consent of the *fraïresse* or *fratrisse*, literally 'female brethren'. In 1262 Alguaire received a papal confirmation which stated that its sisters followed the Rule of Saint Augustine. Some of the women involved were widows, and protracted lawsuits were pressed by various relatives deprived of their inheritance. In Catalonia, rule by a female commander was not unique; in 1208 a *soror* Agneta was apparently in charge of the house at San Salvador d'Isot, where from 1236 at the latest there were brethren and sisters together with *conversi* of both sexes, and in 1259 they were being governed by a female *comandatrix*.⁴⁹ The royal hospital at Boxerols

⁴⁸ Cited in Martí Aurell, *Les Noces du comte: mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne, 785–1213* (Paris, 1995), p. 495 n. 3; this work is occasionally unreliable.

⁴⁹ Miret y Sans, *Les Cases de Templers y Hospitalers*, pp. 208–22, 294–6, 551–4; with additional materials in Josep Maria Sans i Travé, 'Hugueta de Cervelló, Feudatari de l'Espluga Francolí (s. XIII)', in *Miquel Coll i Alentorn: Miscel·lània d'Homenatge en el seu Vuitantè Aniversari* (Barcelona, 1984); Jose Ma. Llobet i Portella, 'La Comanda hospitalera de Cervera durant els segles XII, XIII i XIV segons una Carta de Jaume Pasqual (1788)', in *Actes*

in Catalonia which the king granted to Sigena in 1227 also contained brethren, sisters and *conversi* and donats of both sexes, who were all instructed to become Hospitallers.⁵⁰

Near Tortosa on the southern coast of Catalonia a house with some nuns from Sigena was set up, apparently in 1290, at La Rápita; it suffered from piratical attacks and never flourished despite a measure of royal support, and in 1382 it was so deserted that instructions were given to recruit new nuns and donats and to repair its buildings. By 1496 the community had moved to Tortosa.⁵¹ The Priory of Navarre had women donats and fully professed sisters from the twelfth century onwards, and in 1307 a hospice or hospital at Bargota on the pilgrim road to Santiago de Compostela was to be managed by two *duenyas* who were to look after the sick and poor there. The original male commandery at Bargota had apparently become a female house by 1312 when it had a prioress, but in 1441 the Master at Rhodes declared that, whereas it had once had many sisters, only four remained and they were incompetent – *ydiote et indocte* – and unable to provide the hospitality which the house had formerly given pilgrims. The Master, therefore, moved the male hospice to what became a new male house at Puente la Reina nearby, and in 1469 the prioral chapter incorporated the properties of Bargota into the new foundation at Puente la Reina.⁵²

In Castile the male house at Burgos had, somewhat unusually, a female commander who died in 1323 leaving an epitaph which began ‘Aquí jace doña Urraca Ruiz Cuesta que Dios perdone, amén: fue freira en el orden de San Juan de

de les Primeres Jornades sobre els Ordes Religioso-Militars al Països catalans (segles XII–XIX) (Tarragona, 1994), pp. 304–11; Prim Bertran, ‘L’Orde de l’Hospital a les Terres catalanes’, *ibid.*, p. 239; *idem*, ‘El Capbreu-Llevador de la Comanda de Susterris (1378)’, *Urgellia*, 8 (1986–87), 383–4; Jesús Alturo i Perucho, ‘La Disputa de Ciudadà de Lleida Gullem de Rees contra el Monestir sanjoanista de la Mare de Déu d’Alguaire’, in *Miscel·lànea Homenatge a Josep Lladonosa* (Lleida, 1992); and *idem*, ‘Marquesa de la Guàrdia, Fundadora, Comanadora i Benefactora del Monestir femení de la Mare de Déu d’Alguaire de l’Orde de Sant Joan de Jerusalem’, *Llerda: Humanitats*, 50 (1992–93).

⁵⁰ CH, no. 1857.

⁵¹ Miret y Sans, *Los Cases de Templers y Hospitallers*, pp. 589–90; Barquero, *Los Caballeros Hospitalarios*, pp. 208, 213–14; Luttrell, ‘Structure of the Aragonese Hospital’, p. 320.

⁵² Santos García Larragueta, *El Gran Priorado de Navarra de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén (siglos XII–XIII)*, 1 (Pamplona, 1957), pp. 103–6, 152–6, which also discusses a dubious early exception at Barañain; *idem*, ‘La Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén en Navarra: siglo XIV’, in *Las Órdenes Militares en el Mediterráneo Occidental: Siglos XIII–XVIII* (Madrid, 1989), p. 110; Luis Romera Iruela, ‘La Fundación del Monasterio del Crucifijo en Puente la Reina’, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 11 (1981), 598–9, 601–8; Barquero, *Los Caballeros Hospitalarios*, pp. 110, 209–10; *idem*, *La Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén en Navarra: Siglos XIV y XV* (no place, 2004), pp. 124–8.

Acre y comendadora de la Bailía de Burgos et de Logroño'.⁵³ An early Castilian house was that of San Juan de Acre at Salinas de Añana near Vitoria, but its origins were obscure; in 1537 two of its sisters thought it had belonged to the Templars before 1307. There were a number of relatively late foundations, some of which received their own constitutions. In 1478 the sisters of San Juan de Tordesillas were incorporated into the Hospital, and Sister Isabel García was empowered to receive new nuns on the condition, of doubtful canonical validity, that they brought some property with them. In Seville in 1490 Isabel León la Farfana was permitted by the Master to found a house, which became Santa Isabel, under the protection of the Commander of Tocina. Santa María de los Villares at Fuentelapeña near Zamora existed by 1504 and was moved to Zamora in 1531. Only at a late date was there any female house in Portugal; established by 1517 at Evora, it was transferred in 1541 to Estremoz where another women's convent had been founded in 1534.⁵⁴

The earliest Italian house was at Pisa. Ubaldesca, a peasant girl from Calcinaia who lacked a dowry, went to that city at the age of 14 to serve in humble non-professed ways as some kind of oblate in a female hospital; she begged for alms in public and lived a holy and 'penitential' life on a minimum of bread and water, an example of 'holy anorexia'. She was apparently not a donat; she assisted sick nuns but did not serve in the hospital; nor did she live in *clausura*. The sisters of her house of San Giovanni, perhaps quite numerous, may already have been attached to the Order of the Hospital some time before Ubaldesca's death in 1205. In about 1268 the Archbishop of Pisa initiated formal moves for her canonization. The sisters of San Giovanni remained separate, although the rector of the Pisan men's house of San Sepolcro acted as the sisters' chaplain and, most probably, as Ubaldesca's confessor. This was Dotto degli Occhi, also later sanctified, who organized both her burial in San Sepolcro, dressed in the same black habit as the Hospitaller sisters, and her subsequent cult. By 1205 at the latest, San Giovanni had become a Hospitaller hospital for women subject to the *prior* and rector of San Sepolcro; in about 1240 it had a ruler who was described ten years later as its *hospitalaria et rectrix*.⁵⁵ In 1409

⁵³ 'Here lies lady Urraca Ruiz Cuesta, whom may God pardon, amen; she was a sister in the Order of St John of Acre and female commander of the *Bailía* of Burgos and of Longroño': Olga Pérez Monzón, 'La Iglesia Sanjuanista de San Pedro y San Felices (Burgos)', *Boletín de la Institución Fernán González*, 65 (1993).

⁵⁴ José González Carballo, *La Orden de San Juan en Andalucía (Siglos XII–XVI): las Encomiendas* (Seville, 2002), pp. 261–6, and Barquero, *Los Caballeros Hospitalarios*, pp. 210–12, with further detail and references; the Castilian houses deserve further study. The regulations for Evora required noble birth and a dowry of 100 gold ducats, but not literacy: Malta, Cod. 408, fols 189v–196v.

⁵⁵ New texts of the *vita* and revisionary discussion in Gabriele Zaccagnini, *Ubaldesca, una Santa laica nella Pisa dei secoli XII–XIII* (Pisa, 1995); see also Nicole Bériou et al., *Les Sermons et la Visite pastorale de Federico Visconti archevêque de Pise: 1253–1277* (Rome, 2001), pp. 249, 966–9, 1125; Maria Luisa Ceccarelli Lemut and Gabriella Garzella, 'I Gerosolimitani a Pisa e nel Territorio nel Medioevo', in *Riviera di Levante tra Emilia e*

the Master of the Hospital, then in Pisa for the election of a new pope, addressed a bull in their favour to eight named sisters of San Giovanni,⁵⁶ while at the same time a local Hospitaller, Bartolomeo Palmieri, was promoting Ubaldesca's cult, adding a new miracle to her *vita*.⁵⁷ At Verona there were three Hospitaller *sorores* of some type, each described as *domina*, in the Order's hospital dedicated to San Sepolcro in 1178.⁵⁸ At a time well before the translation of her body in 1343–44, Toscana from Zevio near Verona, a married woman traditionally of noble birth, devoted herself to charity, prayer and penitence. She too became a saint but, unlike Ubaldesca, she did help care for the sick in the hospital. On being widowed, she renounced her possessions, became a donat and retired to a small cell next to San Sepolcro in which she also lived on bread and water, with a little oil on feast days; she was buried in the street in front of the church.⁵⁹

From the early thirteenth century various female donats, some with their husbands, joined the Hospital in the Priory of Lombardy. Three sisters described as 'conuersse et deodicatantes et sorores', who were at Santa Croce in Milan in 1259, gave their consent to an act there.⁶⁰ At San Giovanni di Prè in Genoa the sisters were under the rule of the male commander but apparently lived some 25 metres away from the commandery and close to the sea in a building next to their chapel of San Leonardo (fig. 1.2).⁶¹ From the mid-thirteenth century at the latest, women were becoming fully professed sisters in the commandery. In 1312 the Master licensed the Prior of Lombardy to receive as *soror* with all solemnity the daughter of the

Toscana: un Crocevia per l'Ordine di San Giovanni, ed. Josepha Costa Restagno (Bordighera, 2001), pp. 553–8. Ubaldesca is the first in a recent chronological list of 261 identified holy anorexics: Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago, 1985), p. 215; another Hospitaller saint, Toscana, is included at p. 221 but, incorrectly, as dying in 1343.

⁵⁶ Malta, Cod. 336, fols 168–9.

⁵⁷ Zaccagnini, pp. 142–9; additional detail in Anthony Luttrell, 'Gli Ospedalieri a Siena dopo il 1312', in *La Chiesa di San Pietro alla Magione nel Terzo di Camollia a Siena; il Monumento – l'Arte – la Storia*, ed. Mario Ascheri (Siena, 2000), p. 118.

⁵⁸ Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, pp. 35–6.

⁵⁹ Zaccagnini, pp. 134–6. On the cult and iconography of Ubaldesca, Toscana and Fleur, Laura Corti, 'Santi ed Eroi: l'Immaginario dei Cavalieri Gerosolimitani', in *Lungo il Tragitto Crociato della Vita*, ed. Laura Corti (Venice, 2000), pp. 208–10, 218–22; cf. Anthony Luttrell, 'Iconography and Historiography: the Italian Hospitallers before 1530', *Sacra Militia*, 3 (2003), 37–8, 43–4. Neither the reliquary bust in San Sepolcro at Pisa (Zaccagnini, figs 1–3), nor, since its cleaning, the large statue in the Museo Nazionale, Pisa (*Lungo il Tragitto*, p. 200 and fig.) are now acceptable as portraits of Ubaldesca.

⁶⁰ Alessandro Colombo, 'I Gerosolimitani e i Templari a Milano e la Via Commenda', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 58 (1936), 205 n. 1.

⁶¹ As proposed in Anthony Luttrell, 'Gli Ospedalieri a Genova dall'Inchiesta del 1373', in *Cavalieri di San Giovanni e Territorio: la Liguria tra Provenza e Lombardia nei Secoli XIII–XVII*, ed. Josepha Costa Restagno (Genoa, 1999), p. 229, and possibly confirmed in Lorenzo Tacchella, *I Cavalieri di Malta a Genova, Gavi, Torre d'Orba e Tortona (Sec. XII–XVIII)* (Milan, 2000), pp. 100–111, citing a text of 1207 which was 'Actum ad Hospitale S.ti Iohannis in portola S.ti Leonardi'.



Fig. 1.2 Genoa in 1481, from a woodcut by C. R. Grassi: the Commandery of San Giovanni di Prè is in the centre of the plate with a large campanile; the women's chapel of San Leonardo, also with a campanile, is below it by the sea, the women's house possibly being the building behind it

Genoese chancellor, provided she was healthy and sound of limb: 'tam sana sit et integra membris suis'. In 1358 the Master licensed the Prior of Lombardy to receive the Doge's niece. However, in 1352 it was the prioress of the Genoese monastery rather than the Prior of Lombardy whom the Master instructed to receive a noble girl there. In 1369, following a claim that the poor and the sisters at San Giovanni di Prè lacked money and food, the pope incorporated the Commandery of Castellazzo into that at Genoa. In 1373 the nine sisters at San Giovanni di Prè outnumbered the seven or eight brethren there. The men's hospital had some 40 beds and a separate women's hospital or hospice, apparently adjoining the sisters' residence, had 32 beds managed by a salaried 'good woman'.⁶² In 1374 it was the male commander who was to provide the women with their clothing and necessities, but in 1419 the Master instructed the *preceptrix* or female commander at Genoa to increase the sisters' pension from 15 to 25 *libre* a year.⁶³ In 1481 the pope licensed the commander to sell San Leonardo and the women's monastery and hospital, all apparently in decay;⁶⁴ the female community seems to have disappeared thereafter.

Some sisters who were supposedly in the Templar house of San Jacomo in Campo Corbolino at Florence in about 1300⁶⁵ were apparently still there as *sorores recluse* in 1319 after it had passed to the Hospital.⁶⁶ By 1365 there was a female community of five with an abbess at San Niccolò dei Freri, just inside the Porta Romana; a hospital or hospice was founded there in about 1372 by Bindo di Lapo Benini, brother of the Hospital's Prior of Pisa.⁶⁷ During the papal schism, while Fr Riccardo Caracciolo, the 'anti-Master' named by the Roman pope, was in Florence in 1392, he refounded the community, which had a garden and owned five houses. The sisters were to follow the Hospital's Rule and also its statutes, to elect their prioress with confirmation from the Master or the Prior of Pisa and were not to receive sisters without licence from the Master or prior; a male steward was to take charge of the poor in the house. The Hospitaller Leonardo de Buonafede drew up

⁶² Luttrell, 'Ospedalieri a Genova', pp. 228–32; Lorenzo Tacchella, *I Cavalieri di Malta in Liguria* (Genoa, 1977), p. 55 n. 135; *idem*, *I 'Donati' nella Storia del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta* (Verona, 1986), pp. 62–7; site located in L. Grossi-Bianchi and E. Poleggi, *Una Città portuale del Medioevo: Genova nei secoli x–xvi* (Genoa, 1980), pp. 103, 182, 184.

⁶³ Malta, Cod. 321, fol. 51v; Cod. 342, fols 163–163v.

⁶⁴ Cesare Cattaneo Mallone di Novi, *Gli Hospitalieri di San Giovanni a Genova: Sette Chiese, tre Ospedali, due Commende, un Collegio* (Genoa, 1994), pp. 79–89; figs 32, 34; Tacchella, *Cavalieri di Malta in Liguria*, p. 72.

⁶⁵ Paolo Pirillo, 'Terra Santa e Ordini Militari attraverso i Testamenti fiorentini prima e dopo la Caduta di San Giovanni d'Acri', in *Acri 1291: La Fine della Presenza degli Ordini Militari in Terra Santa e i Nuovi Orientamenti nel XIV secolo*, ed. Francesco Tommasi (Perugia, 1996), p. 128 n. 33; his reference is not sufficiently precise for it easily to be checked.

⁶⁶ Guiseppe Richa, *Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese Fiorentine*, vol. iii part 1 (Florence, 1755), p. 295.

⁶⁷ These developments remain obscure: Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, p. 41; see also Giovan Battista Uccelli, *Il Convento di S. Giusto alle Mura e i Gesuati* (Florence, 1865), pp. 84–6.

the house's constitutions and gave a *consiglio* or sermon on the three vows, all copied in Italian into a manuscript of about 1400 with an illumination showing Saint John, Buonafede and a group of sisters in black (fig. 1.3). The *comandatrice* or *precettorissa* was in charge of the monies kept in a chest, to which the *vicaria* and the *camerlinga* also held keys. In 1438 the Prior of Pisa instructed that a chapter was to meet on Fridays and another on Wednesdays when the *vicaria* was to discuss transgressions and impose punishments, including the *septaine* which, at least in the case of male Hospitallers, involved a beating and fasting. This was an urban house and the sisters could not go out without permission. A modest building next door housed the service women, who were donats under obedience who had paid 50 or 60 florins in return for their maintenance for life. They wore black with a white veil; they were not to gossip or to leave the house or eat outside it except on its business. Other donats were widows or married couples. In 1530 the sisters had to be moved to a house in Via San Gallo where they at once created a strict enclosure, building walls, barring windows, installing gratings and appointing watchwomen.⁶⁸

At Penne in the Abruzzi the women of an existing female house were transferred to the Hospital under its Rule in 1291, with the condition that they were to elect their prioress, subject to confirmation by the Prior of Capua, and pay an annual census of six gold *tareni*; this house survived into modern times.⁶⁹ A different type of foundation, the house of San Beviniate outside the walls of Perugia, which had been received from the Templars in 1312 and for which the Hospital had no obvious use since it already had a Perugian commandery. A rich businessman, Rico Corboli, endowed a female house in *juspatronatus* which was to have 25 sisters and an elected abbess, but towards 1400 its numbers fell sharply; scandals became frequent and in 1505 the pope suppressed the women's community and granted the house to a male Hospitaller.⁷⁰ Elsewhere Napoleone de Tibertis, Prior of Venice and founder in about 1358 of the Order's hospice of Santa Caterina at Venice, set up a female Hospitaller house in Umbria shortly before 1364; he endowed an abandoned Franciscan female convent with his family's lands and he built a church at his own expense at Monteleone above Spoleto but the community disappeared, probably in the mid-fifteenth century.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Details in an eighteenth-century compilation based on the house's archive in Florence, Archivio di Stato, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse 133, filza 62, fols 3v, 9–11v (transcript kindly provided by Lodovica Sebregondi); the compilation was printed, but with variations, in Viviani Della Robbia, pp. 105–24; cf. *Manifestatori delle Cose Miracolose: Arte Italiana del '300 e '400 da Collezioni in Svizzera e nel Lichtenstein*, ed. Gaudenz Freuler (Lugano, 1991), pp. 211–13. Buonafede's lengthy *consiglio* and *constitutioni* await detailed study: extracts in Jonathan Alexander and Albinia de la Mare, *The Italian Manuscripts in the Library of the Late Major J. R. Abbey* (London, 1969), pp. 23–35 and plate 13A.

⁶⁹ CH, no. 4154; Tommasi, Chapter 9, p. 235 n. 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 238–56. Penne's constitutions of 1525 are in A. Procacci and M. Costantini, *Note Storiche di Penne da Pinno al Palio del 1600* (Penne, 2000), pp. 239–65.

⁷¹ Tommasi, Chapter 9, pp. 235–7.



Fig. 1.3 Leonardo de Buonafede, lieutenant in the Priory of Pisa, presenting their constitutions to the Hospitaller Sisters of San Niccolò dei Freri at Florence; possibly by Matteo Torrelli, c. 1400

The foundation of the house of Hospitaller sisters at Beaulieu in the region of Cahors is described below by Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq. In 1298 its constitutions were accepted by the Master of the Hospital and the *numerus clausus*, the number of fully professed sisters, was established at 39. In 1259 the noble Guibert de Thémines and his wife Aygline, possibly a relative of the leading Hospitaller Ferrand de Barras, gave to the Order the hospital they had earlier founded at Beaulieu near Cahors. In 1298 their granddaughter Aygline became prioress and 35 sisters met in the chapter house and accepted constitutions which set the *numerus clausus* at 39 and the annual responsions at 21 *livres tournois*. In 1297 Barascon de Thémines agreed with the Master of the Hospital, Guillaume de Villaret, that he would endow and construct another hospital for a *numerus clausus* of 12 sisters at Fieux some 20 kilometres from Beaulieu; there too the sisters were to elect the prioress and the Prior of Saint-Gilles was to confirm her, while a resident Hospitaller priest would serve the chapel; the annual responsions were to be a half mark for the 'poor overseas'. Barascon might in his will unite Fieux to Beaulieu if he so wished. The Master and chapter general, meeting on Cyprus in 1301, accepted this arrangement.⁷² In 1308 the next Master, Guillaume's nephew Foulques de Villaret, granted his kinswoman, the Prioress of Fieux Jourdain de Villaret, the male Commandery of Curemonte in the Priory of Auvergne to increase her incomes; she was to pay the usual responsions.⁷³

Close neighbours, Beaulieu and Fieux, shared a founding family but Fieux did not depend on Beaulieu, and claims for such dependence seem baseless. Both received many privileges and donations, which included various dependent properties.⁷⁴ At a time when papal provisions were becoming increasingly common, when the Curia was at Avignon, when John XXII came from Cahors and when other popes and Masters of the Hospital were from south-west France, these houses experienced considerable papal interference. At Beaulieu the Prioress Aygline de Thémines died in 1322 and was buried there with an inscription. A disputed election ensued and John XXII instructed the Master to name a successor; he chose the

⁷² CH, nos 2352, 2923, 4375, 4413, 4548; Edmond Albe, 'Les Religieuses Hospitalières de l'Ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem au Diocèse de Cahors', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France*, 27 (1941), 182–98; Jacques Juillet, *Templiers et Hospitaliers en Quercy: Commanderies et Prieurés sur le Chemin de Notre-Dame de Rocamadour*, revised edn (Cahors, 1999), pp. 184–215, 289–313; L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8; further materials in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Doat, MS. 123, fols 192–252, 344–64. Albe, 187, describes the Beaulieu ruins; Juillet, pp. 180, 190–208, 281–6, 302–3, has descriptions, sketch plans and photographs of Beaulieu and Fieux.

⁷³ CH, no. 4801; the *sorores* in this text might be taken as evidence for a house containing women (Tommasi, Chapter 3, p. 83) but, in the absence of any other evidence of women at Curemonte, *sorores* was perhaps part of a purely formulaic phrase.

⁷⁴ There is no clear evidence for a supposed female Hospitaller community at Martel, a dependent *domus* of Beaulieu, during the Middle Ages: Albe, 217–20.

Prioress of Fieux, Agnès d'Aurillac.⁷⁵ This was the epoch of the noble Hospitaller saint named Fleur who died at Beaulieu in 1347 and whose career L'Hermite-Leclercq describes.⁷⁶ Agnès died in the same year and, at the sisters' own request, the pope reserved the election to himself and appointed another Aygline de Thémines who was only about 17 and technically too young to act as prioress.⁷⁷ These houses were popular and the pope was 'providing' or assigning individual sisters to Beaulieu and Fieux.⁷⁸ In 1344 Fieux complained that such provisions were blocking the reception of about 13 noble girls waiting as donats for their turn to become fully professed sisters, the places available being limited by the *numerus clausus*. The house faced financial difficulties and the maintenance and instruction of these donats was expensive. The pope insisted that those he had already provided be given preference, but accepted that in future waiting novices should be received before papal nominees.⁷⁹ Numbers apparently fell; there were at least 31 sisters at Beaulieu in 1347, but later lists, apparently incomplete, showed only 14 in 1367, six in 1387 and 13 in 1480.⁸⁰ In 1483 Sixtus IV named as prioress Anne de Castelnau, but as she was only 13 the house was to be administered by the previous prioress, who had resigned, until Anne was 20.⁸¹

Curiously, there was no other female community in any of the three great French provinces which constituted the Hospital's western heartland. Individual women did occasionally live in male houses; thus in 1373 three commanderies in the Priory of France each had a single female donat, two aged 60 and the third 76.⁸² In the south there were already various female *consorores* and donats in the twelfth century.⁸³ East of the Rhône, there were in 1338 numerous male donats, many of them noble, and five female donats, at least one of them a *donata non nobilis*, a non-noble

⁷⁵ Albe, 192.

⁷⁶ L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8. Fleur, aged 14, and her three sisters might have become novices (*puelle literate*) before 1298 and so not have been mentioned in the list of sisters 'of the chapter' of that year, taking full vows only later: cf. *ibid.*, p. 213.

⁷⁷ Archivio Vaticano, Reg. Vat. 180, ep. 765; Archivio Vaticano, Reg. Aven. 96, fols 114–114v.

⁷⁸ Archivio Vaticano, Reg. Supp. 1, fol. 224 (1342); 4, fol. 50 (1343); Reg. Vat. 141, fol. 246 (1348).

⁷⁹ Reg. Aven. 79, fols 65–65v; Reg. Supp. 7, fol. 58v.

⁸⁰ Albe, 193–5.

⁸¹ Reg. Vat. 630, fols 72v–74v; Anne de Castelnau died in 1528.

⁸² *L'Enquête pontificale de 1373 sur l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem*, 1, ed. Anne-Marie Legras (Paris, 1987), pp. 258, 332, 334.

⁸³ Dominic Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister: Templars and Hospitallers in Central-Southern Occitania, 1100–1300* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 64, 117–20, 127, 130; Jörg Oberste, 'Donaten zwischen Kloster und Welt: das Donatenwesen der Religiösen Ritterorden in Südfrankreich und die Entwicklung der städtischen Frömmigkeitspraxis im 13. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschungen*, 29 (2001). Some of Selwood's *consorores*, at Toulouse for example, seem to have been donats.

donat.⁸⁴ In the same area in 1373 were five female donats, all aged between 60 and 70. Some of these, sometimes known as *la mayre*, 'the female boss', actually managed certain houses, and there were complaints at Puymoisson where all the affairs of a community of 17 and its commander were controlled by a woman donat said to be of evil reputation.⁸⁵

The arrangements in the very extensive Priory of *Alamania* were curious. In 1317 the Benedictine nuns at Werendike in Zeeland were seeking a solution to their poverty and the Commander of Saint Catherine's in Utrecht, Jacob van Denmarken who was Bishop of Suden and an adviser to the Count of Holland, secured their transfer to the Hospital's male house at Kerkwerve nearby; the number of women was not to fall below eight *moniales* or full sisters and two *sorores novitiae* or novices.⁸⁶ In 1495 there was a 'convent of nuns' at Kerkwerve with 12 fully professed nuns and two chaplains, one of them the commander; in 1540 it was a 'commandery of virgins' with a prioress, a commander who was the chaplain, two other priests and, supposedly, 12 sisters, all under the protection of the *Balleier* of Utrecht. The situation further north in the flat farming lands of Frisia was extraordinary. As Johannes Mol describes below, there were no knight-brethren or sergeants there, yet by the fifteenth century Frisia had 21 commanderies of which at least 16, and probably more, contained Hospitaller women who lived alongside the brethren, usually under a male commander. From about 1482 the Order was segregating the sexes and enforcing the distinction, hitherto largely ignored in Frisia, between donats and fully professed sisters. Subsequently two houses were ruled by a prioress; in 1495 the convent at Warffum had some 60 fully professed women who sang the offices and in 1540 their number had risen to about 80.⁸⁷ There also were Hospitaller 'sisters' of some sort at Eskilstuna in Sweden.⁸⁸

Throughout Germany many women became donats while others, with or without their husbands, lived in male commanderies in which they had in effect purchased an annuity, a life rent or *Liebgeding*, as part of an economic system which helped to maintain the numerous German brethren; these women commonly enjoyed incomes from their donations which often passed to the Hospital on their death. Variations on such arrangements, often involving donats, were innumerable. In 1360 a *magistra*

⁸⁴ Beaucage, pp. 33, 39, 40, 101, 264, 426.

⁸⁵ 'quod talis mulier regit talem domum religiosam quia aliis transit in malum exemplum': Noel Coulet, 'Les Effectifs des Commanderies du Grand Prieuré de Saint-Gilles en 1373', *Provence Historique*, 45 (1995), 117.

⁸⁶ Frans van Mieris, *Groot Charterboek der Graaven van Holland, van Zeeland en heeren van Vriesland*, 2 (Leiden, 1756), pp. 183–4; further information kindly provided by Johannes Mol.

⁸⁷ Mol, Chapter 7; Johanna Maria van Winter, *Sources Concerning the Hospitallers of St. John in the Netherlands: 14th–18th Centuries* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 447, 453, 520–21, 557–9.

⁸⁸ Isak Collijn, 'Ett Nekrologium fran Johanniterklostret i Eskilstuna', *Nordisk Tidskrift for Bok- och Biblioteksväsen*, 16 (1929).

seu procuratrix hospitalis infirmorum, a mistress or manager of the hospital of the sick, was in charge of the hospital in the large commandery at Würzburg.⁸⁹ There was, however, no German female house. At Mühlen in the Diocese of Worms the sisters of a Cistercian house with a *numerus clausus* of 20 had been attached, perhaps uniquely, to the local Templar commandery apparently as Templar sisters, but they presumably remained in their separate house and they seem to have kept their individual status and endowments, even after the male commandery had passed to the Hospital by 1317.⁹⁰ These Templar *sorores*, and presumably their separate endowments, escaped the dissolution of the Temple in 1312 and they then refused to take the Hospitaller rule and habit, so that in 1324 the pope ordered that they should do so or have their goods seized; no more was heard of them.⁹¹

In 1367, after questioning the officers of various houses and establishing how many members each house should ideally require, the Prior of *Alamania* and his chapter drew up a list of commanderies. The resulting list omitted data for Frisia and Scandinavia, but for the rest it envisaged 792 Hospitallers, only 36, less than 5 per cent, of them women. It listed eight sisters, two priests and two knights at Kerkwerve in Zeeland in the *Ballei* of Utrecht, while the rest were to be in the south: seven sisters in a community of 20 at Heimbach with Mussbach, seven out of 23 at Dorlisheim with Rheinau, seven out of 38 at Freiburg-im-Breisgau with Heitersheim and Neuenberg, and seven out of 13, a majority, at Vilingen. In no case was the female group to number less than seven; probably there were in reality a few fully professed women in other houses. The provincial chapter decided that sisters should wear their traditional mantles and kerchiefs, and also, more significantly, that the women should be reduced in number and grouped in a single house.⁹² That did not happen; a list of burials outside the choir in the Hospital's church at Freiburg included four *sorores* who died in 1310, 1380, 1388 and 1398,⁹³ while in 1413 there were at least five sisters in the commandery at Dorlisheim, one being the 'marshal' and another the *zinsmeisterin* who may have had charge of the sisters' own individual incomes.⁹⁴ In 1395 the Prior of *Alamania* acted in the name of the community of Hospitaller sisters at Vilingen.⁹⁵ There seem to have been separate

⁸⁹ Würzburg Staatsarchiv, Würzburgerurkunden, 5079.

⁹⁰ Michael Schüpferling, *Der Tempelherren-Orden in Deutschland* (Bamberg, 1915), pp. 32–6.

⁹¹ Sigmund Riezler, *Vatikanische Akten zur deutschen Geschichte in der Zeit Kaiser Ludwigs des Bayern* (Innsbruck, 1891), pp. 171–2; Reg. Vat. 77, fol. 289v.

⁹² Karl Borchardt, 'Soll-Zahlen zum Personalstand der deutschen Johanniter vom Jahre 1367', *Revue Mabillon*, 75 (2003), 92–4, 97.

⁹³ Philip Ruppert, 'Verzeichnuss aller in Gott ruhenden Personen bei dem Gottshaus S. Johann in Dem Breisgau', *Freiburger Diözesan Archiv*, 20 (1889), 297.

⁹⁴ Auguste-Charles Hanauer, *Cartulaire de l'Eglise de S. George de Hagenau* (Strasbourg, 1898), p. 212; *Marstellerin* was possibly a family name.

⁹⁵ 'in nomine totius Collegii Domus Johannitarum in opido Vilingen': *Monumenta Zollerana*, ed. Rudolph von Stillfried, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1852), pp. 325–6.

female communities in some Swiss houses. In 1302 there was an endowment at Klingnau specifically for women and in 1342 there was a *domus Johannitarum*, a house of women Hospitallers, there. An exceptional personage was Anna Manesse, a wealthy widow of Zurich who was related to various male Hospitallers. In 1395 she paid over 2300 florins to enter the Commandery of Tobel, presumably as a donat, but she was involved in quarrels at Tobel and then moved to Klingnau; she even secured a promise of the Hospitaller castle of Biberstein when its commander had died, but she predeceased him.⁹⁶

Recruitment, Rules and Everyday Life

Family connections created extensive networks of patronage which brought members, endowments and protection. Sigena's function as a royal pantheon lasted until the Aragonese dynasty changed in 1410. Thus from 1357 Queen Leonor was paying for a hospital with 30 beds and a new dormitory.⁹⁷ The Cervera family at Alguaire and the Thémînes at Beaulieu and Fieux were noble patrons; the Corboli at Perugia were nouveaux riches. While some professed Hospitaller sisters were humble in origin others, for example at Sigena, Alguaire, Beaulieu and Fieux, and to some extent at Buckland and Genoa, were of superior rank. The novices at Fieux were described as *puelle nobiles* in 1344.⁹⁸ Yet even at Sigena the nuns were not all noble, and members of the royal family sought admission for daughters of their officials and servants; thus in 1379 the king commanded the prioress to receive the daughter of a citizen of Lleida whom the previous prioress and her chapter had already accepted.⁹⁹ For the men, the definition of knightly origin required for a knight-brother or *miles* was an ambiguous matter but by the fifteenth century formal proofs of lineage were being demanded, partly as a way of limiting access to lucrative Hospitaller benefices. In some places at least, the women followed suit, formal proofs of nobility eventually emerging for them. In 1505, for example, the

⁹⁶ Hohenrein, Klingnau and Tobel, often claimed as female houses (*Schwesternhäuser*), seem to have been female communities within male houses: Otto Mittler, 'Die Johanniterin Anna Manesse und die Schwesternhäuser des Johanniterordens im 14. Jahrhundert', *Zürcher Taschenbucher*, 67 (1947); cf. Franz Schnyder, 'Johanniter-Ordensschwester in schweizerischen Kommenden', *Annales de l'Ordre Souverain Militaire de Malte*, 35 (1997).

⁹⁷ Regina Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *El Monasterio de Sijena: Catálogo de Documentos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, 2 vols (Barcelona, 1994–1998), 2, p. 2; nos 38, 46, 49, 94, 97–8, 102, 124–5, 137–8, 174, 176–7, 194, 208–9, 221, 275.

⁹⁸ Reg. Aven. 79, fols 65–65v.

⁹⁹ Sáinz, 1, nos 320, 975; 2, p. 4, nos 241–2, 246, 252, 372 *passim*. Karl Schuler, 'The Pictorial Program of the Chapterhouse of Sigena', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New York, 1994, pp. 239–49, provides details on the early sisters, some of them Catalans.

Prioress of Alguaire was accused of receiving a non-noble girl, a *no gentil dona*, contrary to the statutes.¹⁰⁰

A further limitation on the women's entrance was the fee or dowry in money or property on which the houses evidently depended. The sums paid must have varied greatly. Entrance fees, which were technically simoniacal, were often disguised as gifts or alms, *elemosina*. In Perugia the fee was between 10 and 60 florins; in Frisia it was said to vary according to the family's means.¹⁰¹ At Florence in 1502 Lina di ser Alessandro Borsi paid 100 gold florins and in 1532 Argentina di Matteo Strozzi 200 florins, while in 1507 Maddalena di Piero was received to work in the kitchen with an *elemosina* in the form of a vineyard worth 60 florins.¹⁰² Entrants provided linen, foodstuffs and money gifts for each sister. In 1504 a widow gave her nine-year-old daughter Margherita 500 *lire* together with sheets, towels and much else, but she died at the age of 12 without professing; the sisters retained the dowry, claiming that Margherita had been sufficiently old to profess, but they settled the dispute by receiving her younger sister.¹⁰³ Novices, who had to be maintained, presumably paid dowries on first entering the house.

In many cases women entering a female house were to be chosen, within the limit imposed by the *numerus clausus*, by the prioress and convent, as at Beaulieu, Sigena and Alguaire, even if the consent of the local prior was needed.¹⁰⁴ The candidate could be received by a male Hospitaller;¹⁰⁵ sisters resident in a male commandery were presumably received in one. Under pressure from an influential family, women might be accepted with licence from the Master of the Order¹⁰⁶ or, especially from the early fourteenth century, by papal provision. At an unknown early date western officers were forbidden by statute to receive women without Magistral licence, but between c. 1206 and 1262 a new statute altered this to allow such officers to accept candidates if they judged that their reception would be to the Order's advantage and providing that they were not of 'juvenile or suspect age'.¹⁰⁷ This must have referred to more elderly entrants to a male house rather than to young novices in a female

¹⁰⁰ Joaquim Miret y Sans, *Noticia Històrica del Monestir d'Alguayre* (Barcelona, 1899), pp. 34–5; when proof of nobility for women was introduced awaits study.

¹⁰¹ Tommasi, Chapter 9, p. 252; Mol, Chapter 7, pp. 186–7.

¹⁰² Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, pp. 43, 45.

¹⁰³ Viviani Della Robbia, pp. 121–2.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. above, pp. 14, 15, 23; Forey, Chapter 2, pp. 62–4; García-Guijarro, Chapter 5, pp. 145–6; *CH*, no. 3083; Sáinz, 1, nos 320, 975; 2, nos 252, 304, 358.

¹⁰⁵ Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill', 226, 230.

¹⁰⁶ Tacchella, *I 'Donati'*, pp. 63–7.

¹⁰⁷ 'Item, com il fu establi que nul bailli ne autre frere ne face seror sanz especial congié dou maistre decamer, cest establiment est relaissié en ceste forme, ce est à savoir que les priors regardent et conoissent les profiz et les honors, qui porrient avenir à la maison s'il ressevoient les serors, ou les damages, qui porroient ausi avoir s'il les refusoient à ressevoir. Et ces choses en tel maniere regardeés, les priors aient pooir de ressevoir teles serors, qui ne soient juevenes ni d'aage souspesseneus'. *CH*, no. 3039 §22.

community.¹⁰⁸ Thus in 1365 the Master at Rhodes ordered the Vice-Prior of Rome or a commander to receive a man and his wife as knight-brother and sister, provided that they were legitimately born of noble parents, healthy and sound of limb; in 1366 he licensed the Prior of Venice to receive as *soror* the mother of a Hospitaller named Pietro Petrarca.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the men, most sisters remained in the same single house, but there were exceptions¹¹⁰ just as there were various occasions for travel.¹¹¹

The *numerus clausus* was set at 30 at Sigena where it might, however, be exceeded if more sisters could be afforded, and where technically it was also a minimum figure; 20 in 1250 and 30 from 1330 at Alguaire; 39 at Beaulieu; 12 at Fieux; and 25 at Perugia. There were, reportedly at least, 50 'sisters' at Buckland in 1338; 36 were envisaged for Germany in 1367 and there were a number in Frisia.¹¹² Though the *numerus* was not necessarily maintained in full, especially after the plague years began in 1347, the number of fully professed Hospitaller women in western Europe may at some point have exceeded 200. The restriction on numbers might force novices to await a vacancy for their full profession, hence the protest from Fieux in 1344.¹¹³ At Sigena and Alguaire the novices or *escolanas* acted as companions to particular sisters, often their close kinswomen, and might inherit their goods, incomes or rooms.¹¹⁴

Hospitaller women lived under the same fundamental regime as that followed by the men, but there was considerable ambiguity over the whole matter. Fully professed women took the Hospital's habit and followed its Rule. Sigena's Rule stated that transgressions were to be punished according to the Rule of the Hospital, and Hospitaller women were theoretically bound by the Order's statutes, its cumulative legislation passed from time to time in chapter-general, even though many statutes could not have applied to women;¹¹⁵ curiously, in 1422 *esgards* or

¹⁰⁸ Forey, Chapter 2, p. 64, interprets this often misunderstood statute; its text was later corrupted to speak of nobility and virginity as conditions of reception. Tacchella, *I 'Donati'*, pp. 59–60, reproduces a reference to noble qualifications in a corrupted version of the statute published in 1719. *Idem*, *I Cavalieri di Malta a Genova*, p. 113, again suggests that full sisters had to be noble, yet his document of 1312, in *idem*, *I Cavalieri di Malta in Liguria*, p. 55 n. 135, does not indicate that. Nor does it indicate, as Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, pp. 59–60, suggests, that there was any requirement of virginity; that would have excluded widows from becoming fully professed sisters. Literacy was sometimes a requirement: Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill', 225.

¹⁰⁹ Malta, Cod. 319, fols 207v, 228v.

¹¹⁰ For example, above, p. 23–4; Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill', 227.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 223; L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8, p. 221; Sáinz, 1, nos 237, 473, 475, 480, 530, 559, 841, 901–2, 920.

¹¹² Forey, Chapter 2, pp. 58–9; above, pp. 23–4; below, p. 31; Mol, Chapter 7; Tommasi, Chapter 9, p. 248; García-Guijarro, Chapter 5, p. 141.

¹¹³ Reg. Supp. 7, fol. 58v.

¹¹⁴ Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill', 222–3, 233–6; Sáinz, 2, nos 251, 272, 323, 358, 465.

¹¹⁵ For example, Agustín Ubieta Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1 (Valencia, 1972), nos 6, 104; *CH*, nos 859, 1833.

judgements from Rhodes were applied to a dispute about a room at Alguaire.¹¹⁶ The Hospital's brief basic Rule was established before 1153; the regulations that had been followed before that did not survive.¹¹⁷ Of that Rule's 19 clauses, the final three were early additions; eight of the 19 and seven of the original 16 clauses were also found, in essence, in the so-called Rule of Saint Augustine, while perhaps eight of the 19 articles were close to the Benedictine Rule.¹¹⁸ The Hospitaller Rule imposed the seven canonical hours of prayer rather than the nine monastic hours, and it was notably non-monastic in its emphasis on service to the poor and the sick rather than on personal prayer within an enclosed environment. In reality a wide spectrum of non-Benedictine practice was loosely considered to be Augustinian. In 1193 papal letters spoke of the sisters of Sigena as living by the Augustinian rule; in 1226 Sigena itself claimed that its prioress should be elected according to the Rule of Saint Augustine; and the pope stated in 1262 that Alguaire followed the Augustinian Rule.¹¹⁹ In 1228 Sigena was admitted to the Cistercian *familiaritas* involving a communion of prayer.¹²⁰ At Aconbury in 1233 the sisters explicitly demanded a transfer from the Hospitaller to the Augustinian Rule; this case is explored by Nicholson.¹²¹

Many commanderies, and probably some women's houses, had no written copy of any rule. Sisters living in a male house presumably adapted themselves to the men's statutes or regulations. Many of the female communities had their own particular constitution written down, as for Sigena in 1188, 1193, 1207 and 1226, for Alguaire in 1250 and 1330, Penne in 1291 and 1525, Beaulieu in 1298, Perugia in 1324, Florence in about 1392, Seville in 1490 and Evora in 1517.¹²² These constitutions regulated numbers, enclosure, elections, liturgical practice and relations with the male Hospitallers. At Sigena, Queen Sancha realized from the start that the house needed detailed regulations concerning the sisters' life and liturgy. She regarded these as additions both to the Hospital's Rule and to that of Saint Augustine;¹²³ some of these regulations were in fact close to the essentially Benedictine Constitutions of Lanfranc.¹²⁴ Apparently this rule was not used in other

¹¹⁶ Miret y Sans, *Les Cases de Templiers y Hospitallers*, pp. 426–7.

¹¹⁷ Luttrell, 'Hospitallers' Early Written Records', pp. 147–9.

¹¹⁸ Alain Beltjens, 'Les Cinq Règles auxquelles furent soumis les Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem en Terre Sainte et à Chypre', *Société de l'Histoire et du Patrimoine de l'Ordre de Malte: Bulletin*, 9 (2001), 18–20.

¹¹⁹ *CH*, nos 947, 1833; Miret y Sans, *Les Cases de Templiers y Hospitallers*, p. 218.

¹²⁰ Francesco Tommasi, 'Per i Rapporti tra Templari e Cistercensi: Orientamenti e Indirizzi di Ricerca', in *I Templari: una Vita tra Riti cavallereschi e Fedeltà alla Chiesa*, ed. Goffredo Viti (Certosa di Firenze, 1995), pp. 252–3.

¹²¹ Nicholson, Chapter 6.

¹²² Ubieta, *Documentos*, no. 6; *CH*, nos 859, 1272, 1833, 2528; García-Guijarro, Chapter 5, pp. 135–9, 142–9.

¹²³ 'sub regula sacratissimi Hospitalis, simul cum additamentis regule, quas ego illi addidi scilicet sancti Augustini hoc additamentum fecit': Ubieta, no. 6.

¹²⁴ Cf. Schuler, pp. 150–51, 155.

houses, with no manuscript produced outside Sigena. It detailed activities in church, refectory and dormitory, listing many special officers and regulating silence, enclosure, burials, kitchens, latrines and punishments such as whipping. There was a separate *conventus* of novices and there were also *converse* and *donats*.¹²⁵

At Beaulieu in 1298 the officers included a *sacristana*, *selleraria*, *cantrix*, *ostaleria*, *infirmaria*, *hospitalaria* and *porteria*: a sacristan, a cellarer, a leader of the singing, a hosteller, a sister in charge of the infirmary, a guest-mistress and a female doorkeeper.¹²⁶ There was a similar range of officials at Alguaire where the 50 regulations confirmed by the Master and chapter general in 1330 elaborated the arrangements of 1250; the house's *numerus clausus* was reduced to 30. The convent could not alienate property without licence, while money and account books were to be kept in a chest with four keys. The sisters were to have a single refectory and a common dormitory.¹²⁷

While male Hospitallers needed some female services, the sisters always had to employ men, often Hospitaller priests, as chaplains and confessors. The sisters often had male servants around their house.¹²⁸ Although Hospitaller women frequently belonged to a socially superior class of aristocrats or petty nobles, problems with estate management or with their own legal status might compel them to use a male commander or procurator to represent them. How such men were chosen varied: at Sigena and Alguaire the women chose the commander, who depended on them, while at Buckland the men were independent of the nuns, but responsible for their business affairs.¹²⁹ At Sigena the sisters and brothers often acted together in a joint chapter.¹³⁰ The administration of the women's own communities and their agrarian holdings was a major concern to them.¹³¹

How men and women were lodged is uncertain. At Genoa the women's house, hospital and chapel were a little way from the main commandery.¹³² At Buckland the

¹²⁵ García-Guijarro, Chapter 5, p. 136, n. 92. The Sigena Rule is in *CH*, no. 859 (with errors); the best edition is in Antoni Durán Gudiol, 'La Regla del Monestir de Santa Maria de Sixena', *Scripta et Documenta*, 12 = *Monastica*, 1 (Monserrat, 1960), pp. 167–91; discussion in García-Guijarro, Chapter 5; for later copies, *CH*, 1, p. ccxxiv; Durán, pp. 153–5. A twelfth- or thirteenth-century translation into Aragonese, presumably from Sigena, awaits study: *Biblioteca de Catalunya: Catàleg del Museu del Llibre Frederic Marès*, ed. Anscari Mundó (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 9–10.

¹²⁶ *CH*, no. 4413.

¹²⁷ Prim Bertran i Roigé, 'Les Ordinacions del Convent d'Alguaire', *Cuadernos de Historia Económica de Cataluña*, 17 (1977).

¹²⁸ Nicholson, 'Women in Templar and Hospitaller Commanderies', p. 128.

¹²⁹ Forey, Chapter 2, pp. 60, 63; for Florence and Perugia, above, pp. 20–21; Tommasi, Chapter 9, pp. 247, 251.

¹³⁰ For example, Sáinz, 1, no. 569; 2, no. 239; Ubieto, *Documentos*, nos 78, 83, 96, 104.

¹³¹ For example, Agustín Ubieto Arteta, *El Real Monasterio de Sigena: 1188–1300*, (Valencia, 1966), pp. 91–160; Tommasi, Chapter 9, pp. 248–55; Struckmeyer, Chapter 4, pp. 104–5.

¹³² Above, pp. 18–19.

sister's house was 'almost in the commander's *curia*'.¹³³ The men there kept their own separate ground-floor chapel; in 1227 Loretta Countess of Leicester endowed masses to be said in the *major ecclesia*, the larger church, which had a cemetery. There were also fishponds, a dovecote and a barn.¹³⁴ The brethren at Buckland had their own house, properties and economy, paid their own responsions and apparently kept a separate archive. The surviving Buckland cartulary appears largely to be that of the male house, although it included grants made jointly to the sisters and the brethren.¹³⁵ Everywhere priors and commanders had powers of visitation, reformation and correction which could lead to quarrels; in 1300 the Master even summoned the Prioress of Sigena to bring her house's privileges to him in southern France, a move blocked by the Aragonese king.¹³⁶

Hospitaller brethren were occasionally presented in contemporary fictional literature as being sympathetic to women and indeed to men and women involved in love affairs, although such an attitude might have appeared offensive to their vow of chastity.¹³⁷ In real life they had other types of relationship.¹³⁸ Some, and they included Fortaner de Glera the procurator at Sigena in about 1361, had illegitimate children;¹³⁹ Ramon de Ampurias, Prior of Catalonia, was accused both of sodomy and of the rape of many women.¹⁴⁰ In about 1315 a Hospitaller at Rhodes was expelled and severely punished for his relations with a Latin woman.¹⁴¹ There was doubtless a problem on the island where the Order sought to regulate prostitution in the town.¹⁴² In the later fourteenth century the crusade propagandist Philippe de Mézières, who knew Rhodes well, proposed that members of his ideal military order should be married, perhaps in order that they should serve in the East on a more long-term basis.¹⁴³

There was always the possibility of scandal in women's houses. In 1422 two sisters at Alguaire were deprived of their habit after running away; at Sigena in

¹³³ 'quasi in dicta curia preceptoris': Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

¹³⁴ *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Somerset*, 2, ed. William Page (London, 1911), pp. 148–9; *ibid.*, 6, ed. R. W. Dunning (London, 1992), pp. 260–63; Ian Burrow, 'Mynchin Buckland Priory – Topographical Notes', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, 129 (1984–85), 110–13, contains a plan and useful details, but the archaeological possibilities seem strictly limited.

¹³⁵ Struckmeyer, Chapter 4, p. 90 n. 6.

¹³⁶ Forey, Chapter 2, p. 62; Sáinz, 2, pp. 47–8.

¹³⁷ Nicholson, *Love, War and the Grail*, pp. 47, 57–64.

¹³⁸ Sarnowsky, discusses these matters.

¹³⁹ Sáinz, 2, p. 58.

¹⁴⁰ For example, Anthony Luttrell, 'Hospitaller Life in Aragon: 1319–1370', in Luttrell (1992), item xv; *idem*, 'Margarida d'Erill', 234.

¹⁴¹ *Ho Poullogos*, ed. Isavella Tsavare (Athens, 1987), p. 241.

¹⁴² Sarnowsky, p. 185; Elias Kollias, *The Medieval City of Rhodes and the Palace of the Grand Master*, 2nd edn (Athens, 1998), pp. 55–6.

¹⁴³ A. Hamid Hamdy, 'Philippe de Mézières and the New Order of the Passion', *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts* [Alexandria University], 18 (1964), 81.

about 1447 a sister left her rooms to two *escolanas* or novices on condition that they did not paint their faces or wear trimmed dresses. Margarida d'Erill's predicament in 1417 was doubtless an extreme one. Her Hospitaller cousin Ramon Roger d'Erill, the Commander of Alguaire who had received her into the Order there, was accused of being the father of her unborn child; she was said to have admitted publicly to many affairs before entering the Order; there was gossip and scandal in the convent, complicity and attempts at abortion. Ramon Roger travelled to Lleida for Margarida's pregnancy tests and was publicly challenged to a duel by her father, his own uncle, in a sarcastic challenge in the form of a rhymed poem called a *sirventes* that was intended for public recitation and described how Ramon was the father of Margarida's child. The sisters slept in rooms of their own, so that at Sigena some time before 1417 Violant de Lobets was seduced there by a man who entered through her window. Serious allegations were brought after 1505 against Margarida d'Urrea, Prioress of Alguaire, alleging that she had secured the succession as prioress for her illegitimate daughter, also a sister there, and there were other accusations involving incest and murder.¹⁴⁴ The problem was not so much that the women could not be protected by a sufficiently effective enclosure, but rather that the *clausura* itself left them at the mercy of priests and others with access to the convent who could seduce them and then blackmail them into silence.¹⁴⁵

The women's dress was normally black with an eight-pointed cross in white on the left shoulder;¹⁴⁶ in 1367 the German sisters were enjoined to wear a kerchief.¹⁴⁷ Daily life in Hospitaller female houses must have been varied. In Jerusalem some sisters apparently undertook hospital care; in the West some merely lived very close to a hospital, as at Genoa and Pisa. Women certainly served in hospitals and hospices,¹⁴⁸ but in general fully professed Hospitaller sisters did not do so, although Bargota in Navarre was possibly a minor exception.¹⁴⁹ Those in specifically female communities might theoretically be secluded. At Florence and Perugia, for example, there were walls and grilles, together with regulations designed as much to exclude outsiders as to enclose the sisters.¹⁵⁰ The rules of *clausura*, although reinforced by

¹⁴⁴ Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill'.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Linehan, *The Ladies of Zamora* (Manchester, 1997), p. 16; see also Mary Laven, *Virgins of Venice: Enclosed Lives and Broken Vows in Renaissance Venice* (London, 2002).

¹⁴⁶ Sigena Rule in *CH*, no. 859, sections 58–60; above, pp. 21, 22 (fig. 1.3); below, pp. 39, 40 (fig. 1.6).

¹⁴⁷ Above, p. 26.

¹⁴⁸ For English examples: Martha Carlin, 'Medieval English Hospitals', in *The Hospital in History*, ed. Lindsay Granshaw and Roy Porter (London, 1989), p. 32; Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital, 1070–1570* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 80–83; Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Stroud, 1995), pp. 205–13.

¹⁴⁹ Above, p. 16; Forey, Chapter 2, p. 48.

¹⁵⁰ Tommasi, below, pp. 257–8.

Boniface VIII in 1298,¹⁵¹ were generally difficult to enforce and could be relaxed with superior licence, which might allow women to leave their house in pairs on family or other business.

With superior permission, too, sisters could have personal incomes, employ proctors to receive them, hold their own possessions and make a form of testament to dispose of them.¹⁵² At Alguaire and Sigena some sisters had their own private apartments with their own maids, kitchens, furniture, jewels, books in the vernacular and so forth, and Fleur had her own chamber with a curtained bed at Beaulieu.¹⁵³ At Genoa, however, two elderly sisters were two to a room and afraid of losing it in 1374 when the Master, then in Genoa, confirmed it to them for life; he also permitted them to visit relatives and friends without securing their commander's permission.¹⁵⁴ Prayer, silence and reading were supposedly important, but at Perugia there seem to have been guests and parties in the later fifteenth century.¹⁵⁵ By then there was a general trend towards increased luxury and a relaxation of rules. The daily concerns of sisters in male commanderies remain largely obscure.

Literacy and Cultural Interests

The Rule of Sigena emphasized the sisters' fundamental function of prayer. In theory fully professed sisters were required to be literate, but some must have sung in Latin without understanding it.¹⁵⁶ The Sigena Rule demanded Latin sermons from the prioress, but only if she were literate; otherwise, she should speak in the vernacular. Furthermore, the Sigena Rule was translated into Aragonese.¹⁵⁷ By the sixteenth century Sigena's own missal and breviary contained a Hospitaller liturgy in the tradition of the Holy Sepulchre which was adapted in places to local Spanish use.¹⁵⁸ Some correspondence between the Prioress of Alguaire and the Prior of

¹⁵¹ Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: 'Periculoso' and its Commentators, 1298–1545* (Washington DC, 1997).

¹⁵² Sáinz, 1–2, *et passim*; Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill', 234–5.

¹⁵³ Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, pp. 32–4, 56–64; Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill', 228, 233–5; L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8, p. 217.

¹⁵⁴ Malta, Cod. 320, fol. 52.

¹⁵⁵ Tommasi, Chapter 9, p. 257.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. David Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 57–67.

¹⁵⁷ Above, p. 31, n. 125.

¹⁵⁸ *Missale secundum ritum Sixene monasterij: Ordinis Sancti Johannis Hierosolymitani sub regula Beati Augustini* (Zaragoza, 1528), and *Breviarium secundum ritum Sixenie monasterij: Ordinis Sancti Johannis Hierosolymitani sub regula Beati Augustini* (Zaragoza, 1547); cf. Cristina Dondi, 'Hospitaller Liturgical Manuscripts and Early Printed Books', *Revue Mabillon*, 75 (2003), 251–2, 254.

Catalonia was apparently written in Catalan and then translated into Latin.¹⁵⁹ At Beaulieu Saint Fleur knew how to read, perhaps in Latin, but in 1480 several sisters participating in the prioral election there had to have their votes written for them because they could not write: 'quia scribere nescio'.¹⁶⁰

Beaulieu and Sigena had tombs and inscriptions for the prioress, but at Freiburg-im-Breisgau sisters in the male commandery were buried simply in the church;¹⁶¹ the inscribed slabs at Rhodes and Buckland apparently belonged to donats rather than to fully professed sisters (figs 1.1 and 4.3).¹⁶² The Rule at Sigena prescribed infirmary, deathbed and burial procedures.¹⁶³ The obituary book at Alguaire recorded, under the day of the year on which they were to be remembered in prayer, the prioresses and sisters, their vicars and other male Hospitallers, their benefactors and other secular persons.¹⁶⁴

At Perugia, the women lived in a former Templar commandery and must have prayed in the presence of the unique frescoes showing Templar brethren with lions and warlike scenes; after 1324 they themselves had new paintings, including the fresco showing the founder Rico Corboli.¹⁶⁵ Hospitaller women could certainly commission, pay for and even create their own works of art. The sisters in Florence had an ancient painted Crucifixion reputedly endowed with miraculous powers. They had their own choir, at the latest by 1463 when the public assembled in it for the reception of two sisters. The very large *Coronation of the Virgin* (fig. 1.4), which the nuns commissioned from Neri di Bicci through their business representative in 1488, arguably stood on the main altar and divided the church, the sisters attending mass and receiving communion through the small panel which opened at the foot of the painting. The altarpiece was installed by the artist, a sculptor, a carpenter, and two other male workmen. Sisters Maria and Lucretia made candlesticks and a crucifix stand; in 1489 the two paid 14 gold florins for two angels commissioned for the altar table; the candlesticks cost 13 florins while the materials for the gold altarcloth embroidered by Sister Cecilia cost 32 florins; the painting

¹⁵⁹ Copies of the same documents survive in both languages: for example, Barcelona, Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó, Gran Priorado de Catalunya, 651, fols 266v–268v, 385v–387v (1417–20).

¹⁶⁰ L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8, p. 222; Albe, 195.

¹⁶¹ Above, pp. 23, 26; below, p. 39.

¹⁶² Luttrell, 'Hospitaller *Soror*', pp. 133–7.

¹⁶³ Miguel Cortés Arrese, *El espacio de la muerte y el arte de las órdenes militares* (Cuenca, 1999), pp. 36–50.

¹⁶⁴ Maria-Mercé Costa, 'Els Necrologis del Convent d'Alguaire', in Martínez Ferrando archivero: *Miscelánea de estudios dedicados a su Memoria* (Madrid, 1968).

¹⁶⁵ *Templari e Ospitalieri in Italia: la Chiesa di San Bevignate a Perugia*, ed. Mario Roncetti et al. (Milan, 1987), figs 14, 83 *et passim*; Cristina Pantanella, 'San Bevignate a Perugia: Tangenze della Pittura paleologa in Italia', in *L'Arte di Bizanzio e l'Italia al Tempo dei Paleologi: 1261–1453*, ed. Antonio Iacobini and Mauro della Valle (Rome, 1999), p. 255.



Fig. 1.4 Neri di Bicci, *Coronation of the Virgin*, painted in 1488–89 for the Hospitaller sisters of San Niccolò dei Freri at Florence, now in the church of San Giovannino dei Cavalieri, Florence

itself came cheaply at 56 florins. In 1514 a fresco of the Last Supper was painted there by Franciabigio who included in it the Order's eight-pointed cross and the arms of the abbess, who was a Medici, and it showed a rural view through a convent window.¹⁶⁶ In 1526 the Florentine sisters sent presents of rose apples, sheep's cheese, pieces of silk and a box of sweets to the Master who was then in Rome;

¹⁶⁶ Anabel Thomas, 'A New Date for Neri di Bicci's S. Giovannino dei Cavalieri "Coronation of the Virgin"', *Burlington Magazine*, 139 (1997), 103–6; idem, *Art and Piety in the Female Religious Communities of Renaissance Italy: Iconography, Space, and the Religious Woman's Perspective* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 288–9, 293–8, 301–2; S. McKillop, *Franciabigio* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 141–2, figs 41–2, 44–7.

he visited their house and thanked them in the following year.¹⁶⁷ Everywhere the sisters would have had paintings, ornaments, choir books and suchlike (figs 1.3, 4.2, 7.2).¹⁶⁸

The buildings at Sigena were architecturally outstanding.¹⁶⁹ The three western bays of the church's plain arched nave had been built as the chapel of the male commandery before 1187. This may have been the church consecrated, or perhaps rededicated, on 21 April 1188.¹⁷⁰ There was a choir by 1196. In Queen Sancha's time a vaulted Romanesque cloister was attached to the western end of the church's north wall. The long chapter house also abutted the church's north wall immediately to the east of the cloister, while a refectory with great diaphragm arches continued the line of the church to its west. Early in the thirteenth century the church was extended eastwards with the addition of a transept which contained the royal pantheon in its north wing and three semicircular apses beyond the transept (fig. 5.4). In April 1208 Sancha was hoping to attend the dedication of the *templum*, presumably meaning these extensions; she left her jewels, a picture, a relic and various properties to Sigena and chose to be buried in the chapel of San Pedro there.¹⁷¹ In the south wall of the extension was a massive Romanesque portal with numerous mouldings; there was a 'new doorway' of 1217 and a new dedication of the church was licensed in 1258.¹⁷² These buildings demonstrated the austere, relatively undecorated simplicity common to much architecture of the military orders. In 1188 Sancha spoke of 'constructing and building a monastery and a sisters' residence' and in 1191 she pressed for the completion of a tower, not for the sake of enclosure but for aesthetic considerations.¹⁷³ In due course dormitories, including one for the novices, and other offices were placed round and above the cloisters, with quarters for the brethren and male workers somewhere outside the main complex. Further additions followed; in 1355, for example, María Ximénez Cornell, Countess of Barcelhos, who was not a Hospitaller, was buried in a chapel she founded in the south transept.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Viviani Della Robbia, p. 116.

¹⁶⁸ For example, Josep Lladonosa i Pujol, *L'Art Decoratiu al Monestir de Santa Maria d'Alguairre a través dels Llibres de Visites dels Grans Priors de Catalunya* (Lleida, 1985).

¹⁶⁹ Extensive alterations and destructions have made locations uncertain: the plan (fig. 5.1) is partly hypothetical. Jacques Gardelles, 'Le prieuré de Sigena aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles: Étude architecturale', *Bulletin monumental*, 133 (1975), with partial plan, studies only the church and the south-east section of the whole complex; Schuler, pp. 36–9, describes the chapter house. See also Antonio Naval Mas et al., *Real Monasterio de Sigena: Fotografías 1890–1936* (Huesca, 1997).

¹⁷⁰ Durán, 151; Schuler, pp. 36–9.

¹⁷¹ Ubieto, *Documentos*, nos 25, 30, 48–9.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, no. 78; *CH*, no. 2889.

¹⁷³ Ubieto, *Documentos*, nos 6, 10; cf. García-Guijarro, Chapter 5, pp. 122, 125.

¹⁷⁴ Chandler Post, *A History of Spanish Painting*, vol. 8 part 2 (Cambridge, MA, 1941), p. 520; Cortés Arrese, pp. 41, 44–5 (with erroneous date of 1455).



Fig. 1.5 Sigüenza: altarpiece of the Virgin with the donor Fortaner de Glera, Commander of Sigüenza: probably by Pere Serra, 1362–69

Artistic embellishments at Sigena were more or less continuous and costly.¹⁷⁵ The truly outstanding masterpiece was the chapter house with numerous biblical scenes painted, probably during 1190/1194, in the Byzantine style by artists who had close links to the masters of the Winchester Bible.¹⁷⁶ Equally unusual was its elaborate wooden ceiling (fig. 5.2).¹⁷⁷ This was made in the Arabic style, apparently at the same time.¹⁷⁸ The extraordinarily wide painted throne of the Prioress Blanca of Aragon who died in 1348, displayed her arms, various saints of the royal house, three sisters in Hospitaller habit of brown gown, white hood, black mantle and white cross, and a novice with a candle as prescribed in the Sigena Rule.¹⁷⁹ A great altarpiece of the Virgin with its donor, Fortaner de Glera, Commander of Sigena, was painted between 1362 and 1369, possibly by the famous Pere Serra (fig. 1.5).¹⁸⁰ The polychrome wooden sarcophagi of various fifteenth-century prioresses were supported on carved consoles placed some way up the walls of the church's south transept. Painted, usually on the lid, were their recumbent full-figure effigies with closed eyes, crossed hands and white headdresses, while their arms and inscriptions were on the side of the tomb. In 1434 the tomb of a Hospitaller of royal blood, Isabel de Aragón, daughter of Count Pere of Urgel, had an inscription in Catalan; she held a rosary and seated at her feet was a sister with a white cowl and monocle, reading a book (fig. 1.6).¹⁸¹ There were many other artistic items at Sigena.¹⁸² Such works of

¹⁷⁵ Only fragments of this ensemble have survived dispersions, destructions and robberies.

¹⁷⁶ Walter Oakshott, *Sigena: Romanesque Paintings in Spain and the Winchester Bible Artists* (London, 1972), with 227 illustrations; studied in Angel Sicart, 'Las Picturas de Sijena', *Cuadernos de Arte Español*, 39 (1992), and in Schuler, who surveys the extensive literature, suggesting on stylistic and iconographical grounds a date of 1190–94.

¹⁷⁷ Bernabé Cabañero Subiza, *La Techumbre mudéjar de la Sala Capitular del Monasterio de Sijena (Huesca)* (Tarazona, 2000), with numerous photographs.

¹⁷⁸ Cabañero (ibid., pp. 29–46) argues for a date of about 1210 following the Sicilian marriage of Sanchas's daughter Constanza in 1209, but the ceiling, though of the same Arabic tradition as that at Palermo, was not necessarily influenced from Sicily. The ceiling antedated the frescoes: Schuler, p. 140. Further views in García-Guijarro, Chapter 5, pp. 125, 127.

¹⁷⁹ *Museu Diocesà de Lleida 1893–1993: Catàleg-Exposició Pulchra* (Lleida, 1993), pp. 86–7.

¹⁸⁰ Dated in Luttrell, 'Hospitaller Life', p. 112; many artists have been proposed but it is attributed to Pere Serra in María Rosa Manote i Clivilles et al., *Gothic Art Guide: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya* (Barcelona, 2000), pp. 83–5.

¹⁸¹ Post, 8 part 2, pp. 520–28 and figs 242–6; *Museu Diocesà*, pp. 96–8, 106–7; Carmen Berlabé, 'Fundación y patronato real en el Monasterio de Sigena (Huesca): de Alfonso el Casto a Jaime el Justo', in *Imágenes y Promotores en el Arte Medieval: Miscelánea en homenaje a Joaquín Yarza Luaces*, ed. María Luisa Melero Moneo et al. (Bellaterra, 2001), pp. 259–60 n. 17.

¹⁸² Ibid., pp. 261–5; *Museu Diocesà*, pp. 58, 97–8, 128; Carmen Berlabé, 'Les Despuels artístiques del Monastir de Sixena i el Museu Diocesà de Lleida', *Ilerda Humanitats*, 51 (1994); Antonio Naval Mas, *Patrimonio Emigrado* (Huesca, 1999), pp. 181–245; Carmen Berlabé and Isidre Puig, 'Retaules de Sixena al Museu de Lleida – Diocesà i Comarcal: una



Fig. 1.6 Sigena: painted box-tomb of Isabel de Aragón

art might provide a significant, broadening vision to women leading an enclosed life, while daily contact with frescoes could teach Bible stories to illiterate persons.

The Role of Hospitaller Women within the Order

Whereas the Hospital's male commanderies were generally founded to further the purposes of the Order as a whole, female houses usually had a more local inspiration, often determined by their founders. Some female houses were created from an existing non-Hospitaller or male Hospitaller house. Women were anxious to join the Hospital for various, probably often overlapping, reasons. Some had serious spiritual or penitential intentions; others were widows or unmarried, or had some traditional or family connection with the Order; or they simply lived near to a convenient religious house. Occasionally women may have sought to escape into a surrogate family provided by a female community. Hospitaller houses may have been anxious for a woman's properties.

After 1215, when the pope decided to restrict the number of women's orders, the Hospital continued to provide an acceptable opportunity for entry into a religious life. Not all these considerations applied to women entering a male or mixed commandery; these may often have been local recruits attracted by relatively lax enclosure and liturgical duties, or by the possibility of maintaining some contact with their families. Altogether exceptionally, as Mol shows below, a considerable number of 'low budget' houses in Frisia catered for a strong demand from women who faced comparatively low entrance payments. Elsewhere membership of a military order may increasingly have been socially advantageous for a woman's family.

Hospitaller women were lay religious whose condition was in many ways similar to that of many other female religious. The Hospital's Rule was valid for members of both sexes. Inescapably there were differences; like the priest-brethren, the women did not fight and those in female houses were enclosed, if not always strictly. Women were received in the same way and took the same vows as the men; they were supposed to be represented at prioral chapters and usually paid some responsions, even if this provision of resources was rather slight;¹⁸³ in 1373 the sisters at Pisa were paying the Prior of Pisa five florins a year.¹⁸⁴ It is unlikely that the sisters' responsions ever reached a third of incomes as established in the Rule.

The female convents were independent of each other and there was little communication between them. Their ability both to elect their ruler and choose their own officers, and also to receive sisters within an individual house in which they

Proposta de Reconstrucció del Retaule Major del Monestir', *Seu Vella: Anuari d'Història i Cultura*, 2 (2000).

¹⁸³ Above, pp. 14–15, 23, 32; Forey, Chapter 2, p. 67; Tommasi, Chapter 9, pp. 254–5.

¹⁸⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Latin 5155, fol. 48v.

normally remained was not shared by the brethren except in a few male collegiate houses such as those at Corbeil, at Caspe and, from 1450, at Santa María del Monte in Castile.¹⁸⁵ The women were under the ultimate male jurisdiction of the Master and chapter general, as also of their local prior, but so were male Hospitallers. That certainly led to lengthy disputes in which the women attempted to go their own way, but the Order never seriously attempted to suppress its female contingents; in fact, the men were in various instances obliged to help them.¹⁸⁶ Women members were a full and integral part of the Hospital from the time of its origins before 1099; they had no need to press for acceptance. The brothers had no systematic policy towards the sisters, whom they tolerated in male houses or in their female convents wherever they happened to have been founded. The women's communities played a minor role in their Order's general affairs. Although they did not fight or nurse, the women were important to the Order, especially because many of them formed part of wide family and social networks which assured the Hospital support, donations, male recruits and prayer.

¹⁸⁵ On Corbeil, see *CH*, nos 1785, 1788, 1807, 1836; Joseph Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers à Rhodes jusqu'à la mort de Philibert de Naillac: 1310–1421* (Paris, 1913), p. 237; Carlos Barquero Goñi, 'El Proceso de Formación del Convento Hospitalario de Santa María del Monte: 1375–1500', *Anales Toledanos*, 37 (1999).

¹⁸⁶ For example, Forey, Chapter 2, pp. 59, 64, 67–8; Struckmeyer, Chapter 4, pp. 95–7, 103, 110–111.

Chapter 2

Women and the Military Orders in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*

Alan Forey

‘Antiquus hostis femineo consorcio complures expulit a recto tramite paradisi’: here the Templar rule is reiterating the commonly expressed view that contact with women endangered the morals and salvation of men leading a religious life.¹ According to the rule of the Teutonic Order, however, there was also a further risk. The will to fight would be weakened by the presence of women: ‘viriles animos per feminarum blandicias frequenter contingat emolliri’.² Yet, despite these fears, bonds of varying kinds were in fact established between women and military orders during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and at least four Orders – the Hospital of Saint John, Santiago, Calatrava and the Order of the Faith and Peace – had convents of sisters dependent on them before 1300.

The links between women and male houses of the military orders were of diverse kinds, and obviously in many instances brought no close involvement in the life and work of a convent. Many women entered into bonds of confraternity with a military order:³ in return for gifts their names were included in the prayers said in its chapels

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¹ [‘Through feminine company, the ancient enemy [the devil] has expelled many from the straight path to paradise’:] *La règle du Temple*, ed. Henri de Curzon (Paris, 1886), p. 69 ch. 56; see also *ibid.*, pp. 69–70, ch. 72: *Periculosum esse credimus omni religioni vultum mulierum nimis attendere*[: ‘we believe that it is dangerous for any religious man to look too much at women’s faces’].

² [‘Manly hearts are frequently softened by the blandishments of women’:] *Die Statuten des Deutschen Ordens nach den ältesten Handschriften*, ed. Max Perlbach (Halle, 1890), p. 52, ch. 31.

³ References to them occur not only in individual agreements of confraternity but also in confraternity lists: see, for example, Antonio Ubieto Arteta, ‘Cofrades aragoneses y navarros

and they were regarded as participants in the good works it performed. Some, especially widows, were placed under the protection of a military order.⁴ Others were given material aid. In some cases this was provided only in times of hardship: in 1196, for example, the Templars of the Catalan house of Gardeny promised to Nina of Talladell that they would give assistance if she became poverty stricken.⁵ More commonly, however, orders provided regular allowances of food or money. These were sometimes in the form of an annual allocation – as in the case of Isabella, the daughter of Robert More, who in 1262 was assigned a yearly pension of 100s. by the Hospitallers of Éterpigny⁶ – and concessions of this type clearly brought recipients into only minimal contact with a male convent. But some women received maintenance, either occasionally or regularly, inside a convent. In 1176 the Aragonese provincial master of the Temple promised food to Dominic of Batizo and his wife Mary ‘sicut est nostra consuetudo in domus nostre [sic] de Osca aut de Monson ubi recipere volueritis omnibus diebus vite vestre’. As the couple lived in Pertusa, it is clear that they were merely being granted a right of hospitality which was to be exercised whenever they wished.⁷ By contrast, the Navarrese Hospitallers in 1290 promised to Elvira Iñiguez de Sada

el pan et la agua ena nuestra casa de Bargota et que vos demos una casa en lo quoyal vos seades en Bargota en toda vuestra vida et que prengades de la vianda conventual quada dia pora vos et pora una mançeba que vos sierva quada dia.⁸

The purpose of some allowances was merely the provision of necessities for those who could not easily maintain themselves: pensions or corrodies for them were purchased with land or money. The annual pension of ten quarters of wheat, ten quarters of barley, two oxen, four pigs, six sheep, 500 faggots and cash allowances which Agnes, the widow of Richard of Weston, was receiving at the beginning of the fourteenth century had been assigned to her by the English Templars in return for a

de la milicia del Temple (siglo XII). Aspectos socio-económicos’, *Aragón en la edad media*, 3 (1980), 29–93.

⁴ Alan J. Forey, *The Templars in the Corona de Aragón* (Oxford, 1973), p. 375, doc. 10; María Luisa Ledesma Rubio, ‘Colección diplomática de Grisén (siglos XII y XIII)’, *Estudios de edad media de la Corona de Aragón*, 10 (1975), 753–4, doc. 60.

⁵ Forey, p. 46.

⁶ *CH*, 3, pp. 34–5, no. 3031.

⁷ [‘As is our custom in our houses of Huesca or of Monzón where you may wish to receive it, for the rest of your life’:] Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional (henceforth AHN), Sección de Códices, cód. 499, pp. 7–8, doc. 11; Forey, p. 46.

⁸ [‘Bread and water in our house at Bargota and that we give you a dwelling in which you may stay in Bargota for the rest of your life and you may receive the food of the convent each day for yourself and for a maid who will serve you each day’:] Santos A. García Larragueta, *El gran priorado de Navarra de la orden de San Juan de Jerusalén* (Pamplona, 1957), 2, pp. 576–7, no. 515.

payment of 100 marks and a gift of a wood and 80 acres of land.⁹ Yet some of those who were being maintained by a military order were seeking to share to a certain extent in the life of a male convent. In an agreement made in 1248 the Templar commander of the Aragonese convent of Zaragoza not only promised maintenance to Dominica of Sieste but also assigned her a house in 'qua sedeatis circa ecclesiam nostram':¹⁰ the location of her place of residence is presumably not without significance. Dominica of Sieste did not surrender all her possessions, but some women who attached themselves to a male convent adopted a monastic form of life, abandoning all their property. They are not, however, always easy to identify. Documents are often insufficiently precise in wording, and employ formulae which could describe a variety of arrangements. Nor are titles a sure guide. Just as the word *frater* was often applied to men who had merely entered into bonds of confraternity with a military order, so the term *soror* was used of women who were still living in the world: Aurembaix, the countess of Urgel, gave herself to the Order of Santiago as a *soror* in 1229, but that year was also marked by her marriage to Pedro, the son of Sancho I of Portugal.¹¹ There are nevertheless some documents which are more explicit.

Templar sources provide a number of examples of women who associated themselves with the order and adopted a form of religious life. The Templar rule itself indicates that *sorores* had been admitted before 1129; it does not give precise information about their status, but the wording suggests that the bond was not just one of confraternity.¹² After 1129 some women who wished to withdraw from the world still turned to the Temple even though the rule forbade any further admissions of sisters. In Roussillon a certain Açalaidis gave herself to the Temple in 1133 'ad servicium Dei faciendum subtus obedienciam de ipso magistro qui ibidem est et in antea venturus est, sine ulla proprietate'. She further explained that she was giving the order her property 'propter quod Dominus meus fuit dignatus esse pauper per me: sicuti ille fuit pauper per me, sic volo esse paupercula per illum'.¹³ A document from the year 1172, which was copied into the cartulary of the French convent of Sommereux, records that Robert Hardels 'tam cum uxore sua propria relinquere

⁹ *Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward II. 1307–1313* (London, 1892), p. 410.

¹⁰ ['In which you may live next to our church':] AHN, cód. 469, p. 505, doc. 511.

¹¹ *Bullarium equestris ordinis S. Iacobi de Spatha*, ed. Antonio F. Aguado de Córdoba, Alfonso A. Alemán y Rosales and José López Agurleta (Madrid, 1719), pp. 90–91.

¹² *Règle du Temple*, p. 69, ch. 56. [Some additional information about women and the Temple is provided by Helen J. Nicholson, 'Templar attitudes to Women', *Medieval History*, 1.3 (1991), 74–80, and by Tommasi, Chapter 3.]

¹³ ['To serve God under obedience to the master who was there then and who would be in the future, and without any personal property ... because my Lord deigned to become poor for my sake: just as He was poor for my sake, so I wish to be a pauper for his sake':] *CT*, pp. 51–2, no. 68.

et societatem [fratrum] suscipere decreverat',¹⁴ and in Catalonia Adaladis of Subirats in 1185 gave

corpus meum deo militaturum et animam meam per oblationem ut hostiam vivam deo placentem sub obediencia et regula domini dei omnipotentis patris et filii et spiritus sancti et domus milicie Templi Salomonis suorumque fratrum.¹⁵

In England towards the end of the twelfth century the Archdeacon of Salisbury issued a certificate to the effect that Joanna, the wife of the knight Richard of Chaldefelde, 'in presenciam officialium nostrorum castitatem servare promisit et ut ipse [sic] regule Templi subdat ultimo promisit'.¹⁶ Berengaria of Lorach, who is described as *donata* and *soror* in thirteenth century documents of the Catalan house of Barbará, was probably also pursuing a form of religious life, for in witness lists her name appears amongst those of the brethren and she is also recorded as giving counsel to the commander of Barbará.¹⁷ Finally, a memorandum written by the Commander of Payns, Ponzard of Gizey, which was produced in Paris during the trial of the Templars, mentions the admission of sisters who promised poverty, chastity and obedience.¹⁸ Thus, despite the prohibition in their early rule, the Templars accepted women who renounced their goods and took the normal monastic vows. This practice was apparently not occasioned by any decree issued by the central authorities of the Temple.¹⁹ In an order which expanded throughout western Christendom, however, there was inevitably scope for local initiatives.

¹⁴ ['Together with his wife he decided to leave his personal property and to enter the company of the brothers':] *Cartulaire de la commanderie des Templiers de Sommereux*, ed. Auguste de Menche de Loisne (Paris and Beauvais, 1924), pp. 31–2, no. 20. When Peter of Cintruénigo promised the castle of Cintruénigo in Navarre to the Templars in 1173, the condition was made that if he predeceased his wife, she should retain the castle for life, unless she remarried or 'ad illam religionem fratrum Templi Salomonis ire voluerit' [wished to join the Order of the brothers of the Temple of Solomon]: AHN, Ordenes militares, San Juan de Jerusalén, Castellania de Amposta, legajo 38, doc. 21.

¹⁵ ['My body to fight for God and my soul as an offering like a living sacrifice, pleasing to God, under obedience and under the rule of the Lord God omnipotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and the house of the knighthood of the Temple of Solomon and its brothers':] Barcelona, Archivo de la Corona de Aragón (henceforth ACA), Cancillería real, pergaminos de Alfonso I [II], no. 383.

¹⁶ ['In the presence of our officials promised to preserve her chastity and pledged lastly that she would subject herself to the Rule of the Temple':] *Records of the Templars in England in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Beatrice A. Lees, British Academy Records of the Social and Economic History of England and Wales, vol. 9 (London, 1935), p. 210, Wiltshire Charters no. 5.

¹⁷ ACA, pergaminos de Jaime I, nos 716, 1143, 1282.

¹⁸ *Procès des Templiers*, ed. Jules Michelet, 2 vols (Paris, 1841–51), 1, p. 38; *Le dossier de l'affaire des Templiers*, ed. Georges Lizerand (Paris, 1964), pp. 158–60.

¹⁹ The prohibition on the admission of sisters was still retained when the rule was translated into French: *Règle du Temple*, p. 69, ch. 70.

The rule of the Teutonic Order does by contrast permit the admission of *consorores* who were to be assigned a special residence away from the quarters of the brethren.²⁰ It provides no further details about their status, but in vernacular versions of the rule the term *consorores* is rendered as *halpswesternen* and *halvensusteren*, and a decree issued later in the thirteenth century makes it clear that half-sisters, like half-brethren, were obliged to live chastely, obediently and without property.²¹ There are also documents from the thirteenth century that refer to the assumption of the habit of the Teutonic Order by women. In 1258, for example, the *Deutschmeister* Conrad of Nürnberg made an agreement with a married couple which included the provision that ‘uno eorum mortuo alius qui supervixerit cum bonis omnibus predictis ad ordinem assumetur, si voluerit, et more solito vestibus iamdicti ordinis induetur’.²² Evidence of a different kind is provided by a charter drawn up in 1254 concerning a hospital which had been founded at Sterzing: it records that the founder’s widow had not only subjected the hospital to the Teutonic Order but also decreed that the brethren and sisters resident there should live according to the Teutonic Order’s rule.²³

Little is known of the form of life adopted by women who early associated themselves with the Hospital of Saint John or with Calatrava, but presumably both the Hospitaller sisters in England who were brought together to live at Buckland in the later twelfth century and also the *moniales* of Calatrava who were assembled at San Felices de los Barrios in the early thirteenth century were already leading a regular life before they took up residence in these convents.²⁴

In the rule of the Teutonic Order the admission of *consorores* is explained by the comment that ‘quedam infirmorum in hospitalibus et pecorum obsequia apcius per muliebrem sexum efficiuntur’: it was clearly envisaged that they would undertake hospitaller and menial functions.²⁵ The assumption has often been made that at an early stage the sisters of the Hospital of Saint John were similarly employed in caring for pilgrims and the sick, although it has also been argued that when female convents were established this activity was abandoned in favour of a more

²⁰ *Statuten*, ed. Perlbach, p. 52, ch. 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²² [‘When one of them died the survivor should be admitted to the Order with all their aforesaid property, if they wished, and should be given the clothing of the aforesaid Order in the accustomed manner’:] *Codex diplomaticus ordinis sanctae Mariae Theutonicorum*, ed. Johann H. Hennes, vol. 1 (Mainz, 1845), pp. 160–61, no. 174.

²³ *Die Urkunden des Deutsch-Ordens-Centralarchives zu Wien*, ed. Eduard G. Pettenegg, vol. 1 (Prague and Leipzig, 1887), p. 71, no. 260; Marian Tumlér, *Der Deutsche Orden im Werden, Wachsen und Wirken bis 1400* (Vienna, 1955), p. 87.

²⁴ Below, p. 52.

²⁵ [‘Some of the services of caring for the sick in the hospitals and animal husbandry are performed better by the female sex’:] *Statuten*, ed. Perlbach, p. 52, ch. 31.

contemplative form of life.²⁶ In support of the first contention it may be pointed out that in the twelfth century care was provided in the Hospital for women as well as for men;²⁷ that the Teutonic Order, which did employ *consorores* in this capacity, was said to have imitated the Hospital in 'pauperibus et infirmis';²⁸ and that hospitals founded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did usually contain both *fratres* and *sorores*.²⁹ Yet whereas the rules and statutes of other hospitals commonly make reference to sisters, the Hospitaller rule mentions only *fratres*, even though it contains a section concerning the care of the sick;³⁰ and when later hospitals adopted some of the regulations of the Hospital of Saint John, the word *sorores* was added where necessary.³¹ It should also be noted that in statutes drawn up for the Hospital of Saint John in 1182 the tasks of washing the sick, making their beds and preparing their food were assigned to *servientes*.³² Moreover, if Hospitaller sisters in England had been caring for the sick in the twelfth century, it would seem unlikely that there would have been only one or at most two resident in any commandery, as was the case before they were dispatched to Buckland;³³ and if it is accepted that prayer rather than charitable work was the primary function of newly founded convents of Hospitaller sisters, it may be questioned whether women who had previously been employed in caring for the sick could easily have made the transition to a life of prayer, which would have required a certain amount of liturgical knowledge.³⁴

Since the Temple and Calatrava did not normally undertake hospitaller duties, this function cannot be attributed to women who associated themselves with male houses of these orders. There were, of course, other domestic tasks to be performed,

²⁶ Antoine du Bourg, *Histoire du grand-prieuré de Toulouse* (Toulouse, 1883), p. 529; Joseph Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et à Chypre (1100–1310)* (Paris, 1904; repr. 1999), p. 300; *idem*, 'Les Hospitalières de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem', *Mélanges sur l'ordre de S. Jean de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1910), no. 12, pp. 6–7; Edwin J. King, *The Knights Hospitallers in the Holy Land* (London, 1931), p. 160.

²⁷ *CH*, 1, pp. 425–8, no. 627; John of Würzburg, 'Descriptio Terrae Sanctae', ch. 11, in *PL*, 155, col. 1085 [and now in *Peregrinationes tres: Saewulf, John of Würzburg, Theodoricus*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis*, 139 (Turnhout, 1994), p. 131, lines 1282–4].

²⁸ ['In care for the poor and sick':] *Tabulae ordinis theutonici*, ed. Ernst Strehlke (Berlin, 1869; repr. Toronto, 1975), p. 266, no. 297.

²⁹ León Le Grand, *Statuts d'hôtels-dieu et de léproseries. Recueil de textes du XIIIe au XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1901), *passim*.

³⁰ *CH*, 1, pp. 62–8, no. 70.

³¹ Le Grand, pp. 42, 48–9.

³² [That is, to servants or serving-brothers:] *CH*, 1, pp. 425–8, no. 627.

³³ William Dugdale, *Monasticon anglicanum*, vol. 6 (London, 1830), p. 837; Thomas Hugo, *History of Mynchin Buckland Priory and Preceptory* (London, 1861), p. 93, no. 4. [On Buckland see also Struckmeyer, Chapter 4.]

³⁴ In many hospitals sisters and lay brothers were expected merely to recite a certain number of paternosters for each office: Le Grand, pp. 18–19, 37, 46, 65, 108, 121.

but even if these were carried out by women, the latter were not necessarily leading a religious life. In the south of Europe there was the possibility of using slave labour, although in practice the employment of female slaves appears to have been rare in the military orders. Inventories compiled in Aragon in 1289 indicate that Templar houses often owned a considerable number of slaves, but almost all were male: the convent of Monzón was the only one which possessed a female slave.³⁵ Women were, however, more commonly employed for pay. In a Hospitaller survey compiled in 1338 *lotrices* [washerwomen] are listed among the paid employees of several English houses, and an inventory of Templar possessions at Baugy drawn up after the arrest of the brethren in 1307 notes that three women were employed for pay in the dairy there.³⁶ In the following year, after the surrender of the Templar stronghold of Castellote, the Aragonese King Jaime II ordered that the women who had been in the service of the Order there should receive the wages owed to them:³⁷ Jaime was therefore doing nothing out of the ordinary when, in making provision for Templars held in custody in the convent of Valencia, he further commanded in 1308 that two women should be paid for carrying water and performing other necessary domestic duties.³⁸ Although earlier evidence of women in the pay of the military orders is difficult to find, the practice of employing women in this way was not uncommon in male religious houses, and there is no reason to suppose that in the fourteenth century the military orders were departing from earlier custom.

It should not therefore be assumed that all the women adopting a form of religious life at a house of a military order were undertaking hospitaller or domestic duties: for some the religious life may have been an end in itself. Positive evidence is inevitably lacking, but – partly because of the limited number and exclusiveness of nunneries in the West – it was not unusual for women to abandon the world and adopt a life of piety and devotion in the vicinity of churches or alongside male religious houses: recluses accommodated in buildings adjacent to monasteries are recorded in all parts of Western Christendom. Of course, some of those who gave themselves to military orders just wanted to be buried in the habit: an early thirteenth-century Hospitaller document from the Dauphiné, for example, contains the promise made to one woman that ‘si prius moreretur quam maritus ejus sepeliretur sicut soror cum cruce’.³⁹ But others – including wives of male recruits – may have been intending to live a life of devotion and prayer.

³⁵ Joaquín Miret y Sans, ‘Inventaris de les cases del Temple de la Corona d’Aragó en 1289’, *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 6 (1911), 62–9; Forey, p. 285.

³⁶ Larking and Kemble, pp. 29, 33, 48, 53, 67; *Dossier*, ed. Lizerand, p. 54.

³⁷ ACA, Cancillería real, registro 291, fols 164v–165.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 136; for other similar instructions, see *ibid.*, fols 147–147v, 266v–267.

³⁹ [‘If she should die before her husband she would be buried like a sister of the Order, with the cross’:] Cyr U. J. Chevalier, *Cartulaires des Hospitaliers et des Templiers en Dauphiné*, Collection de cartulaires dauphinois, vol. 3 (Vienne, 1875), p. 44, no. 81.

Until the later twelfth century this could only be done by establishing ties with a male house, but in the closing decades of that century the first female convents dependent on military orders began to appear. To trace the history of the foundation of houses for women is, however, no easy task. The evidence is often sparse and there is sometimes the difficulty of determining whether the sources are referring to a female convent, with its own officials, or merely to a group of sisters attached to a male house. It is clear, however, that the number of convents for women was relatively small.

This is apparent from an examination of Hospitaller foundations in England, Aragon and France – the areas for which the fullest information is available. In England, Buckland was the only house of Hospitaller sisters which endured for any length of time. It was founded towards the end of Henry II's reign and survived until the sixteenth century.⁴⁰ In the early thirteenth century Margaret of Lacy did subject to the Hospital the house for women which she was founding at Aconbury in Herefordshire, but after a prolonged dispute in the 1230s it severed its links with the Hospitallers.⁴¹ Some sisters are also known to have been resident at Hampton in Middlesex in 1227 – in that year Henry III allowed the Hospitallers to keep dogs to guard the house there 'in qua manent sorores ordinis Hospitalis'⁴² – but this is the only reference to sisters at Hampton in the thirteenth century and they may not have formed a separate community.⁴³

In Aragon Alfonso II sought to found a house for Hospitaller sisters in 1177: as an endowment he granted the castle and township of Grisén, near Zaragoza.⁴⁴ But references to sisters of Grisén cease for a while after 1178,⁴⁵ and that the convent there foundered is apparent from records concerning the establishment of a new house at Sigena in 1187 for it was then decreed that all Hospitaller sisters in the Castellany of Amposta should reside at Sigena.⁴⁶ At the end of the twelfth century Sigena was apparently the only female convent belonging to the Hospitallers in Aragon, but shortly after 1200 references to sisters begin to occur in the documents of San Salvador de Isot, and for part of the thirteenth century there was a

⁴⁰ For surveys of the history of Buckland, see *Victoria History of Somerset*, vol. 2 (London, 1911), pp. 148–50; Hugo, *History of Buckland*.

⁴¹ *CH*, 2, pp. 451–2, 457, 472, 498–501, 513, nos 2047, 2059, 2086, 2138, 2140, 2167. [See now also Nicholson, Chapter 6.]

⁴² ['In which sisters of the Order of the Hospital are living':] *CH*, 2, p. 362, no. 1858; *Calendar of the Charter Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, 1226–1257*, vol. 1 (London, 1903), p. 30.

⁴³ The survey of Hospitaller lands in 1338 makes no reference to sisters at Hampton: Larking and Kemble, p. 127.

⁴⁴ *CH*, 1, pp. 357–8, no. 523; Ledesma Rubio, pp. 703–4, no. 5.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 704–6, no. 6 for the last reference.

⁴⁶ Agustín Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, vol. 1 (Valencia, 1972), pp. 11–14, no. 5; *CH*, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835. Sigena is approximately halfway between Zaragoza and Lérida.

comendatrix [female commander] exercising authority there.⁴⁷ In the middle of the thirteenth century several sisters, including a *comendatrix*, were again resident for a brief period at Grisén,⁴⁸ but a more permanent establishment was founded at that time at Alguaire, to the north of Lérida. The original intention had been to create a convent for sisters at Cervera, farther to the east, and the Castellan of Amposta had assigned the commandery of Cervera for this purpose, but in 1250 it was agreed that the foundation should be at Alguaire.⁴⁹ But no further convents of Hospitaller sisters were established in Aragon before 1300.

At that time there were no more than three in France. In 1259 Guibert of Thémynes and his wife Aigline subjected to the Hospital of Saint John the house which they had founded at Beaulieu, in the Diocese of Cahors, and this became a convent for sisters;⁵⁰ in 1297 the Hospitaller grand master William of Villaret assigned the Order's house at Fieux, in the priory of Auvergne, to Bonsom of Thémynes, who undertook to establish a convent of Hospitaller sisters there;⁵¹ and lastly, in the next year an existing foundation at Martel was apparently subjected to the sisters of Beaulieu.⁵²

The only other military order which possessed several female convents by 1300 was Santiago. In the later thirteenth century it had six, all of them situated in the Iberian peninsula. Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos in northern Castile was a house of canons when it was given to Santiago by Alfonso VIII in 1186, but at the end of the twelfth century it became a convent for sisters.⁵³ San Spiritu de Salamanca was

⁴⁷ Joaquín Miret y Sans, *Les cases de Templers y Hospitalers en Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1910), pp. 209–12.

⁴⁸ Ledesma Rubio, pp. 754–72, nos 61–71.

⁴⁹ Joaquín Miret y Sans, *Noticia histórica del monestir d'Alguayre de la orde sagrada y militar del Hospital de Sant Joan de Jerusalem* (Barcelona, 1899), pp. 12–13; *CH*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528 [cf. Anthony Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill, Hospitaller of Alguaire: 1415–1456', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 28 (1998), 219–49.]

⁵⁰ *CH*, 2, pp. 872–4, no. 2923 [cf. L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8].

⁵¹ *CH*, 3, pp. 714–17, no. 4375; cf. *ibid.*, 3, pp. 674–5, no. 4296.

⁵² Du Bourg, p. 537; *CH*, 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413. On houses of sisters in other countries, see *ibid.*, 1, pp. ccxiv–ccxxx; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), p. 241.

⁵³ Julio González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, vol. 2 (Madrid, 1960), pp. 794–5, no. 463; Derek W. Lomax, *La orden de Santiago (1170–1275)* (Madrid, 1965), p. 80; Julio González, 'El monasterio de Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos', *Homenaje a Fray Justo Pérez de Urbel, OSB*, vol. 2 (Burgos, 1977), pp. 413–14; María S. Ferrer Vidal y Díaz del Reguero, 'Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos: un monasterio femenino de la orden militar de Santiago', in *En la España medieval. II. Estudios en memoria del professor D. Salvador de Moxó* (Madrid, 1982), p. 338. [See now also María Echániz Sans, *Las mujeres de la orden militar de Santiago en la edad media* (Salamanca, 1992); María Echániz Sans, 'Las freilas de la orden de Santiago durante la edad media', *Las órdenes militares en la península ibérica. I. Edad media*, ed. Ricardo Izquierdo Benito and Francisco Ruiz Gómez (Cuenca, 2000), pp. 979–1000].

similarly a male house when Alfonso IX of Leon granted it to Santiago in 1223, but the Order sold it to Alfonso's son, Martin Alfonso, and to the latter's wife, Mary Méndez, who wanted to found a house for sisters of Santiago.⁵⁴ In 1194 Sancho I of Portugal gave Santos-o-Vello for the establishment of a house of clerics, but a female convent was set up there instead, although few sources concerning this foundation have survived; and similarly little is known about the convent at Destriana, near Astorga.⁵⁵ On the eastern side of the peninsula the convent of San Pedro de la Piedra, near Lérida, was begun in 1260,⁵⁶ and the house of San Vicente de Junqueres, which had apparently been founded in 1212, was inherited from the Order of the Faith and Peace.⁵⁷ It had been subjected to the latter order by Garsendis, Viscountess of Béarn, in 1233,⁵⁸ and is the only convent of sisters known to have been linked with that Order, just as San Felices de los Barrios, whose origins can be traced back to the year 1219, was the only female house attached to Calatrava in the thirteenth century.⁵⁹

Since foundations for sisters were few, there was in some orders a marked contrast in the numbers of male and female houses: whereas new establishments for brethren were rapidly created as an order's property increased, none of the military orders possessed much more than a handful of convents for sisters. A difference may also often be noted in the manner in which male and female houses were established. While patrons assigned property specifically for the foundation of convents for sisters, the purpose of grants to brethren of the military orders was usually to provide financial aid for the struggle against the infidel. In many parts of the West new houses for men were established not as the result of a single act of endowment but when the growth of an order's property in a particular district required the creation of a new administrative centre.

⁵⁴ Lomax, pp. 81–2; Julio González, *Alfonso IX*, vol. 2 (Madrid, 1944), p. 548, no. 434; *Bullarium S. Iacobi*, pp. 209–10; [and see now also María Echániz Sans, *El monasterio femenino de Sancti Spiritus de Salamanca. Colección diplomática (1268–1400)* (Salamanca, 1993)].

⁵⁵ Lomax, pp. 78, 83; Rui de Azevedo, P. Avelino de Jesus da Costa and Marcelino Rodrigues Pereira, *Documentos de D. Sancho I (1174–1211)*, vol. 1 (Coimbra, 1979), pp. 109–10, no. 71.

⁵⁶ Lomax, p. 83; Regina Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *La orden de Santiago en la Corona de Aragón: La encomienda de Montalbán (1210–1327)* (Zaragoza, 1980), pp. 135–6; *eadem*, 'El monasterio santiaguista de San Pedro de la Piedra en Lérida', *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 11 (1981), 385.

⁵⁷ Lomax, pp. 82–3; Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *Santiago en Aragón*, p. 134; María P. Ibáñez Leiria, 'La fundación y primera época del monasterio de Junqueras (1212–1389)', *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 11 (1981), 363.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 376–7, no. 1.

⁵⁹ Joseph F. O'Callaghan, 'The Affiliation of the Order of Calatrava with the Order of Citeaux', *Analecta sacri ordinis Cisterciensis*, 16 (1960), 43; Angel Manrique, *Annales Cistercienses*, vol. 4 (Lyons, 1649), pp. 170–71. San Felices de los Barrios is near Amaya in the Diocese of Burgos.

One reason for the establishment of the first female houses was the desire to bring together the women who were attached to male convents. Buckland was assigned to the Hospitallers so that sisters formerly resident at Standon, Hampton, Carbrook and other English commanderies could be transferred there.⁶⁰ In 1220 the Cistercian general chapter similarly gave permission to the brethren of Calatrava ‘moniales dispersas in unum congregare et includere in loco competenti et distante a Calatrava per duas aut tres dietas’.⁶¹ This concession is obviously linked with an agreement made in the previous year between the master of Calatrava and García Gutiérrez and his wife, who had decided to found a house [at San Felices de los Barrios] ‘in qua vivant sorores Calatravenses, ut conventualiter habitent atque ibidem suum ordinem servant’.⁶² The desire to have sisters living together is further indicated by decrees stating that sisters should live only in the houses established for them. This was stipulated when Buckland was founded as well as when Sigena was set up in 1187.⁶³ In this way sisters were not only able to share fully in a conventual form of life but also freed from the moral dangers that might arise if they were attached to male houses.⁶⁴

In the Order of Santiago, which admitted married brethren, houses for women may originally have been established as a means of providing a refuge for members’ widows, although the evidence is not conclusive.⁶⁵ The earliest version of the rule of Santiago includes the provision that

ab illis mulieribus que viros non habuerint, queratur si maritos velint accipere. Volentibus liceat nubere. Nolentes locabuntur locis aptis et monasteriis que sunt de domo ubi necessaria eis administrabuntur.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Dugdale, 6, p. 837; *The Cartulary of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem in England, Secunda Camera. Essex*, ed. Michael Gervers, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, New Series, vol. 6 (Oxford, 1982), p. 570, no. 961.

⁶¹ [‘To gather the scattered nuns together and place them in a suitable place, two or three days’ journey from Calatrava’:] *Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis Cisterciensis*, ed. Joseph M. Canivez, vol. 1 (Louvain, 1933), pp. 520–21.

⁶² [‘In which the Calatravan sisters may live, so that they may follow an enclosed life and observe their rule’:] Manrique, 4, pp. 170–71. O’Callaghan, p. 43, sees the concession by the Cistercian chapter as conferring a right to found further nunneries, but its purpose seems to have been merely to confirm the agreement made in 1219.

⁶³ Dugdale, 6, p. 837.

⁶⁴ The military orders were not alone in seeking to group women together: see, for example, Ludovicus Milis, *L’ordre des chanoines réguliers d’Arrouaise* (Bruges, 1969), pp. 512, 515.

⁶⁵ Lomax, p. 80, argues that female novices were accepted from the outset.

⁶⁶ [‘Those women who do not have husbands should be asked if they wish to take a husband. Those who wish, should be allowed to marry. Those who do not so wish should be placed in appropriate places and monasteries which belong to the Order, where their needs will be provided for them’:] Jean Leclercq, ‘La vie et la prière des chevaliers de Santiago d’après leur règle primitive’, *Liturgica*, 2 (1958), 354.

This version of the rule does not define who these women were, but the decree is obviously to be taken in conjunction with the statement in Alexander III's bull of confirmation of 1175 that

si autem viri premortui fuerint et relicte ipsorum, que ordinem susceperunt, nubere voluerint, denuntietur hoc magistro sive comendatori ut cum illius conscientia cui mulier ipsa vult nubat.⁶⁷

And also with a thirteenth-century version of the rule which decrees that

aquelas mugeres aqui transieren sos maridos esten en los monesterios, e si alguna bona vida fiziere e fueras del monesterio quisiere remaneçer si el maestro por bien lo viere remanezca, e si alguna quisier casar digalo a so maestro o a so comendador, que con so mandado se case.⁶⁸

This version of the rule also reveals that Santiago's convents were expected to house the wives of brethren during periods of fast and also when their husbands were absent; but practices of this kind would scarcely explain the introduction of houses for women.⁶⁹

Once it had been accepted that a military order could include convents for women, various motives would prompt patrons to add to their number. To found a religious house was not only regarded as a means to salvation: in some instances it was also seen as a way of making suitable provision for a patron's own entry to the religious life. The Hospitaller convent of Alguaire was founded by Marquesa of Cervera, the widow of William of Guardia, and she became the first head of the house, to be succeeded in 1268 by her daughter Geralda.⁷⁰ It was similarly on the initiative of Constance, the widow of William of Anglesola, that Santiago's house of San Pedro de la Piedra was established, with Constance as the first prioress.⁷¹ It was also not unusual for the patron of an independent religious house to affiliate it to a

⁶⁷ ['But if any of the men die and their widows, who had entered the Order, wish to marry, this should be declared to the master or the commander so that the women may marry with his knowledge':] José Luis Martín, *Orígenes de la orden militar de Santiago (1170–1195)* (Barcelona, 1974), p. 251, no. 73.

⁶⁸ ['Those women whose husbands have died are to live in the monasteries, and if any of them is living a virtuous life and seeks to remain outside the monastery, if the master sees that it would be beneficial she may remain there, and if any wishes to marry she should tell her master or her commander, so that she may marry with his permission':] Lomax, p. 224, no. 1, ch. 19.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 224, no. 1, chs 17–18; Enrique Gallego Blanco, *The Rule of the Spanish Military Order of St James, 1170–1493* (Leiden, 1971), pp. 98, 100, chs 13–14.

⁷⁰ Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, pp. 11, 14. [For the earlier date of 1254, Luttrell – Nicholson, Chapter 1, p. 15.]

⁷¹ Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *Santiago en Aragón*, pp. 136–7; *eadem*, 'Monasterio de San Pedro', pp. 385–6.

well-established order as a way of ensuring the foundation's future prosperity. This was perhaps a reason for the subjecting of Beaulieu to the Hospitallers in 1259, although it can hardly explain why the viscountess of Béarn placed San Vicente de Junqueres under the authority of the Order of the Faith and Peace, for the latter had only recently been established and had achieved only limited expansion. In this instance more personal influences may have been at work, for the viscount of Béarn had been among the leading patrons of this military order in the south of France.⁷²

While personal ties may have influenced the viscountess of Béarn, military orders may in some cases have been favoured by other patrons partly because of the moderate character of their observances. It was apparently felt in some quarters that a very strict way of life, such as that of Cîteaux, was not very suitable for women.⁷³ It should also be remembered that at the time when female convents dependent on military orders were beginning to be founded, some other religious orders were seeking – though not altogether successfully – to check admissions of sisters and to stop new affiliations of nunneries.⁷⁴ By contrast, some military orders appear to have welcomed the creation of further houses for women. The foundation of a convent for sisters does not, of course, in itself necessarily indicate enthusiastic support among an order's officials, for the latter might be subjected to external pressures which they would be unwise to resist: in this context it may be noted that a document concerning the foundation of Sigena refers to the *crebras preces* [the frequent requests] made to Hospitaller officials by the Aragonese Queen Sancha.⁷⁵ But it was presumably on the initiative of the master of Santiago that Santos-o-Vello became a female convent instead of a house for clerics as Sancho I had intended; and on a number of occasions military orders contributed some of the property and revenues required for the foundation of new houses for sisters. The master of Santiago gave property in Lérida for the foundation of San Pedro de la Piedra, just as the Hospitallers had assigned the commanderies of Cervera and Alguaire for the support of the convent to be established at Alguaire.⁷⁶ The Hospitallers were clearly also anxious to gain control over the foundation at Aconbury, for it was reported that

⁷² *Les registres de Grégoire IX*, vol. 1, ed. Lucien Auvray, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome (Paris, 1896), pp. 476–8, no. 753.

⁷³ Jacques de Vitry, *Historia occidentalis*, ch. 15, ed. John F. Hinnebusch (Fribourg, 1972), pp. 116–17; Brenda Bolton, *The Medieval Reformation* (London, 1983), pp. 82, 86.

⁷⁴ Ambrosius Erens, 'Les soeurs dans l'ordre de Prémontré', *Analecta praemonstratensia*, 5 (1929), 10–12; Sally Thompson, 'The Problem of the Cistercian Nuns in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries', *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History, Subsidia, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 238–42; Milis, pp. 515–16.

⁷⁵ *CH*, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, no. 5.

⁷⁶ Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *Santiago en Aragón*, pp. 136, 275–6, no. 49; *eadem*, 'Monasterio de San Pedro', pp. 385, 401–2, no. 2; *CH*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528; Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, pp. 12–13. In 1245 Marquesa of Cervera had, however, given the Hospitallers 1000 *morabetinos*.

Margaret of Lacy had subjected it to them 'exhortationibus fratrum Jerosolimitani Hospitalis'; and they were later reluctant to relinquish authority over it.⁷⁷

Foundation documents provide few explanations of the orders' readiness to foster the creation of further houses for women. The establishment of Alguaire was described merely as a work of mercy: the Hospitallers assigned property

atendentes et considerantes devoto corde unum ex operibus misericordie domum sanctam edificare et constituere, in quam venientes hujus mundi falacis contagia valeant diluere, et suorum peccaminum veniam obtinere et celestis regni coronam possidere.⁷⁸

It may of course be pointed out that Santiago's constitution necessitated the establishment of some houses for women, and that as the order expanded a growing number would be required, while other orders may have been concerned to provide convents where wives of male recruits could adopt a religious life: but these arguments are never advanced in the sources.

Yet, although the surviving documents offer little insight into the orders' attitudes, it is clear that houses for sisters were not founded primarily to assist in the activities which characterized the military orders. Women could in the first place take no part in fighting. But even among the brethren of the military orders only a minority was actively engaged in the conflict against the infidel, and one function of male houses away from the borders of Christendom was the provision of resources for the struggle. Women's convents were, however, usually able to give very little material assistance to their male colleagues.⁷⁹ Nor did they participate to any extent in the charitable work undertaken by some military orders. Convents for sisters were usually called *monasteria*, not *hospitalia*:⁸⁰ their duties did not normally include the care of the sick, the poor or pilgrims. It has admittedly been asserted that there was a hospital at Aconbury,⁸¹ but apparently the only evidence in support of this claim is the inclusion of the words 'remanentibus ibi vetulis mulieribus ad pauperum Hospitalis et infirmorum obsequium' in a document issued by Gregory IX in 1233,⁸² and it would be rash to assume that the papal chancery was always adequately informed about the nature and functions of particular religious houses. The only

⁷⁷ ['On the urgings of the brothers of the Hospital of Jerusalem':] *CH*, 2, pp. 451–2, 457, 472, 498–9, 500–501, 513, nos 2047, 2059, 2086, 2138, 2140, 2167.

⁷⁸ ['Considering and having in mind with devoted heart that one of the works of mercy is to found and construct a holy house, in which those who come may be washed clean from the contagion of this false world, and may obtain mercy for their sins and possess the crown of the celestial kingdom':] *ibid.*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528.

⁷⁹ Below, p. 67.

⁸⁰ See, for example, *CH*, 2, pp. 498–9, 691–3, 854, nos 2138, 2528, 2889; 3, pp. 22–4, 536–7, nos 3015, 4040.

⁸¹ William Rees, *A History of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in Wales and on the Welsh Border, including an account of the Templars* (Cardiff, 1947), pp. 60–61.

⁸² ['The old women dwelling there for the care of the poor and sick of the Hospital':] *CH*, 2, pp. 451–2, no. 2047.

Hospitaller house [in the West] which can be definitely shown to have undertaken duties of this kind was that at Beaulieu: the document recording its transference to the Hospitallers in 1259 contains a reference to hospitality for the poor, and a *hospitalaria* was among the officials mentioned when a set of regulations for the house was compiled in 1298.⁸³ But Beaulieu had already been a hospital, providing care for the poor and pilgrims, before it was subjected to the order of Saint John,⁸⁴ and it should not be regarded as typical of female convents in that order: no reference to the office of *hospitalaria* occurs elsewhere.

It has sometimes been suggested, however, that women's houses undertook charitable work of a different kind by educating the young.⁸⁵ Santiago's convents certainly provided instruction for some of the daughters of brethren. This is clear from a clause about brothers' widows in a thirteenth-century version of the rule: 'aquella que non quisiere casar more en el monesterio e si fias oviere sean nodridas consigo en la orden en virginidad e sean guardadas fasta XV annos e apprendan letras'.⁸⁶ Daughters were to be educated as well as reared in the Order's houses. It may also be pointed out that Hospitaller sources contain a number of references to *puellae* [young girls or novices] and that the rule drawn up for the convent of Sigena in 1188 mentions a *magistra puellarum*.⁸⁷ Yet it would seem that these were girls who were intending to enter the order: in 1191 the Aragonese queen Sancha dispatched to Sigena a widow 'cum tribus puellis ex tribus nobilibus ortis' with instructions that they should all be admitted to the habit.⁸⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that the education of outsiders was a normal function of female houses attached to military orders.

Houses for sisters were in fact not primarily charitable foundations. Almsgiving is the only charitable activity mentioned in the rule of Sigena, and the sisters there were expected to devote the time between services to reading and manual labour.⁸⁹ The religious life was an end in itself. The differing emphasis in male and female convents of the military orders is exemplified by the contrasting nature of their religious observances. Whereas lay brethren of the orders were assigned a passive role in services and were merely obliged to repeat a fixed number of paternosters

⁸³ *CH*, 2, pp. 872–4, no. 2923; 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 626–7, no. 2352.

⁸⁵ Du Bourg, p. 529.

⁸⁶ ['A widow who does not wish to remarry is to remain in the monastery and if she has daughters they are to be reared alongside her in the order in virginity and remain there until they are fifteen years old and learn how to read and write':] Lomax, p. 224, no. 1, ch. 19; Gallego Blanco, pp. 100–102, ch. 15.

⁸⁷ ['A female official in charge of the novices':] Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 18–40, 42–3, nos 8, 10; *CH*, 1, pp. 532–47, no. 859; *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III preserved in the Public Record Office, 1227–1231* (London, 1902), p. 65.

⁸⁸ ['With three maidens of noble birth':] Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 42–3, no. 10.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 18–40, no. 8; *CH*, 1, pp. 532–47, no. 859.

for each of the canonical hours, sisters participated fully in the recital of divine office.⁹⁰

This contrast is reflected in the existence in at least some female houses of the offices of *cantrix* and *sacristana*, for there were usually no equivalent posts in male convents of the military orders.⁹¹ This is the most obvious difference between the officials in male and female communities, although there were variations in the titles assigned to those who had charge of houses. The heads of male establishments were usually known as commanders or preceptors but, although the term *comendatrix* or a vernacular equivalent was used in some Hospitaller houses in Spain and in some convents of sisters dependent on Santiago,⁹² those in charge of female communities more commonly bore the title of prioress, while the head of San Felices de los Barrios was an abbess.⁹³

The heads of female houses – whether abbesses, prioresses or *comendatrices* – often had larger communities subject to them than their male counterparts. There were of course some small establishments for women: at Grisén between 1240 and 1260 there were apparently never more than three Hospitaller sisters resident, and in 1266 the chapter of Santiago decreed that San Pedro de la Piedra should contain no more than seven.⁹⁴ But these were scarcely typical. In 1207 Innocent III ordered that 30 sisters should be maintained at Sigena, and in 1266 it was similarly decreed by the general chapter of Santiago that 30 sisters should reside at Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos.⁹⁵ Sixteen years earlier a maximum of 20 had been imposed on the Hospitaller house of Alguaire, and in 1298 the Hospitaller grand master limited the numbers at Beaulieu to 39.⁹⁶ These figures obviously do not indicate the actual size of communities, but the imposition of upper limits suggests that, as might have been expected, there was normally a plentiful supply of recruits; and it can be shown that some houses did at times contain roughly the numbers which had been laid down. In 1298 there were at least 35 sisters resident at Beaulieu, and in 1330 the numbers

⁹⁰ *Règle du Temple*, p. 171, ch. 282; *Statuten*, ed. Perlbach, pp. 34–5, ch. 8; *CH*, 1, pp. 532–47, no. 859; Ubieta Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 18–40, no. 8.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1, *passim*; *CH*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528; 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413. [The male equivalents were the cantor and the sacrist.] In the male branches of the military orders the office of sacrist seems to have existed only in the leading convents of orders which were affiliated to Cîteaux: O’Callaghan, pp. 8–9.

⁹² Ledesma Rubio, pp. 754–9, 762–72, nos 61, 64–5, 67–71; Miret y Sans, *Les cases*, pp. 211, 216; Lomax, pp. 80–83; González, ‘Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos’, pp. 414–17.

⁹³ O’Callaghan, p. 43. In the Hospital the heads of male houses were sometimes called priors. Of the other offices existing in female convents, that of sub-prioress was the equivalent of the subpreceptor or sub-commander of a male house, and those of *clavigera* and *cellaria* also had their counterparts in male convents [keeper of the keys and cellarer].

⁹⁴ Ledesma Rubio, pp. 754–9, 762–72, nos 61, 64–5, 67–71; Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional (henceforth MBN), MS 8582, fol. 62v.

⁹⁵ Ubieta Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 78–80, no. 43; see also *ibid.*, 1, pp. 82–4, no. 46; *CH*, 2, pp. 76–7, no. 1272; Lomax, p. 80.

⁹⁶ *CH*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528; 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413.

living at Alguaire totalled at least 19.⁹⁷ It may also be noted that when Hospitaller houses in England were surveyed in 1338 it was reported that there were usually 50 sisters at Buckland.⁹⁸ At that time the number of Hospitaller brethren residing in the whole of England, Scotland and Wales was little more than twice that amount; and they were scattered among some 50 establishments.⁹⁹ In 1338 the largest male houses were at Chippenham, Clerkenwell and Buckland, and contained ten, seven and six brothers respectively. Even these were exceptional, as Chippenham had an infirmary for old and sick brethren, Clerkenwell was the Hospitaller headquarters in England and Buckland provided brothers for the needs of the neighbouring house of sisters.

Although free status was an entry requirement for both male and female recruits to the military orders,¹⁰⁰ houses for women may have been in practice more exclusive than men's convents. This would obviously be possible if there was considerable pressure for places in a relatively small number of convents. No detailed investigation of the family origins of sisters in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has, however, been conducted, and there seems to be little justification for the claim that at Sigena all sisters were of noble descent.¹⁰¹ Yet most of the thirteenth-century Prioresses of Sigena appear to have belonged to the upper nobility of Aragon and Catalonia, and minor officials also often came from well-known families: in the later 1230s, for example, the Prioress of Sigena was Sancha Jiménez de Urrea, and her subordinate officials included Sancha Jiménez de Luesia, Oria Jiménez de Luesia and Alaydis, countess of Armagnac.¹⁰² By contrast, male houses of the Hospitallers in western Europe were often in the charge of sergeants, who were merely of free status and not of knightly descent.

Unlike men's convents, communities of sisters could not be completely self-reliant. Women's houses were inevitably dependent on male assistance in both spiritual and temporal matters. Some nunneries employed secular priests and lay administrators, but convents of sisters that were affiliated to a male order normally obtained help from brethren belonging to that order. Those attached to military orders usually had the services of male colleagues, although they were not always obliged to employ these. The convent of San Spiritu de Salamanca was under no

⁹⁷ Ibid., 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413; Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, p. 16.

⁹⁸ Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

⁹⁹ Ibid., *passim*.

¹⁰⁰ Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 49–51, 78–80, nos 17, 43; *CH*, 1, pp. 598–600, no. 946; 3, pp. 22–4, no. 3015; *Bullarium ordinis militiae de Calatrava*, ed. Ignacio J. de Ortega y Cotes, Juan F. Alvarez de Baquedano and Pedro de Ortega Zúñiga y Aranda (Madrid, 1761), pp. 47–9.

¹⁰¹ Agustín Ubieto Arteta, *El real monasterio de Sigena (1188–1300)* (Valencia, 1966), p. 32. Recruits to San Vicente de Junqueres were certainly from more varied backgrounds: María M. Costa, 'Les dames nobles de Jonqueres', *Il Col·loqui d'història del monaquisme català*, vol. 2, Scriptorium Populeti, vol. 9 (Poblet, 1974), p. 258.

¹⁰² Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 224–6, 228–30, nos 151, 153.

obligation to have a commander from Santiago to administer its property, and the same privilege seems to have been enjoyed by San Pedro de la Piedra.¹⁰³ A similar conclusion might be drawn from the wording of several documents concerning Hospitaller convents. When Alguaire was established in 1250, for example, the provision was made that ‘castellanus Emposte teneatur dare preceptorem dicto monasterio, si dicta priorissa illum petierit, et indiguerit, nisi dictus frater fuerit in alia bajulia comendator’.¹⁰⁴ But this clause may have been explaining how a Hospitaller commander was to be provided when the need arose: it does not necessarily imply that the prioress could choose not to employ one. In the fourteenth century it was certainly accepted that there should be a Hospitaller preceptor at Alguaire.¹⁰⁵ When Fieux was being established in 1297, however, no reference was made to a Hospitaller commander: it was merely decreed that one brother chaplain should reside there.¹⁰⁶

The number of brethren actually serving in sisters’ convents seems to have varied from place to place. Although the charter recording the foundation of Alguaire in 1250 refers to the sending there of other brothers as well as a preceptor, later medieval sources suggest that there was usually only a preceptor;¹⁰⁷ and only one brother is mentioned in the records of Grisén when it was a female house in the mid-thirteenth century.¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere there was a larger male establishment. The general chapter of Santiago in 1266 decided that the sisters of Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos should have two brother priests and three other brethren *para sus labores*, as well as a commander.¹⁰⁹ At Buckland a male community with its own officials existed alongside the sisters’ convent, and provided both a brother seneschal to administer the sisters’ property and also brother chaplains.¹¹⁰ The male establishment at Sigena similarly resembled other male houses of the Hospital. It usually consisted of a preceptor, chaplain, *claviger* [keeper of the keys] and sometimes a sub-preceptor, as well as other brothers who were employed in administrative or agricultural work: some, for example, were called by the titles *laborator*, *procurator vinearum* and

¹⁰³ Lomax, p. 82; Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *Santiago en Aragón*, p. 138, and *eadem*, ‘Monasterio de San Pedro’, p. 391. In 1289 the Prioress of San Pedro entrusted the administration of the convent’s property to a layman, but this was apparently because the house was in debt to him.

¹⁰⁴ [‘The castellan of Amposta is obliged to assign a brother as commander to the monastery, if the said prioress asks him and is in need of one, unless the said brother is already commander of another bailiwick’:] *CH*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528.

¹⁰⁵ Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ *CH*, 3, pp. 714–17, no. 4375.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528; Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, pp. 17–18, 28–30.

¹⁰⁸ Ledesma Rubio, pp. 768–9, no. 70.

¹⁰⁹ [‘To do their work’:] MBN, MS 8582, fol. 62v.

¹¹⁰ *A Cartulary of Buckland Priory in the County of Somerset*, ed. and trans. Frederic W. Weaver, Somerset Record Society, 25 (1909), pp. 14–16, 110, 128, nos 19, 20, 190, 221; Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

maioralis ovium.¹¹¹ Yet whereas the male community at Buckland was independent of the neighbouring sisters' convent and had its own property, at Sigena brothers and sisters came to form a single *domus* or *conventus*,¹¹² under the authority of the prioress. When the Castellan of Amposta made an agreement with the Aragonese Queen Sancha in 1187 about the foundation of the sisters' convent, it was made clear that brothers living at Sigena were to be subject to the prioress, and this ruling was reiterated in a document issued by the grand master of the Hospital in 1207.¹¹³ At the outset the brothers may have been reluctant to accept this subordinate position, for there are several documents from the convent's early years which record transactions carried out in the name of the brethren alone:¹¹⁴ this could be explained by the fact that a male commandery had already been in existence at Sigena before the house for women was established. But for most of the thirteenth century the prioress was clearly regarded as the head of the whole community, and documents concerning the rights and properties of the convent were issued in her name.¹¹⁵ The situation at Sigena was thus markedly different from that at Buckland, but uniformity of practice should not be expected in an order whose houses were scattered throughout Western Christendom.

The employment of brothers in female convents was not the only practical link which existed between the latter and the male branches of orders. Houses of sisters were as far as possible accommodated within the existing governmental and administrative structure of the military orders, which was usually characterized by a marked degree of centralized control. San Felices de los Barrios became a daughter house of Calatrava and was also subject to the general chapter of the Cistercian order.¹¹⁶ In the Hospital, convents of sisters were subjected not only to the grand master and general chapter but also to the head of the province in which they were situated and to the provincial chapter; and the female houses of Santiago were similarly under the control of the ruling elements of that order. The rights which leading officials and chapters of the military orders enjoyed over sisters' houses were not, however, always the same as those exercised over men's convents.

Like abbesses and prioresses elsewhere, but unlike the heads of male houses in the military orders, those placed in charge of sisters' convents were elected officials. When new houses were being founded, the first head was sometimes appointed by a male superior acting in conjunction with the founder – as at the Hospitaller house of

¹¹¹ ['Labourer, husbänder of vines and chief shepherd':] Ubieto Arteta, *Monasterio de Sigena*, pp. 25–32; *idem*, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, *passim*.

¹¹² See, for example, Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 52–3, 81–2, 89–91, nos 19, 45, 53.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 11–14, 82–4, nos 5, 46; *CH*, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; 2, pp. 76–7, no. 1272.

¹¹⁴ Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 48, 66–7, 74–6, 85, nos 16, 31, 40, 41, 47.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, *passim*; *CH*, 2, pp. 528, 599, 651–2, 818–19, 859, nos 2197, 2287, 2430, 2815, 2889; 3, pp. 82, 308, 313, nos 3084, 3541, 3555.

¹¹⁶ *Statuta*, ed. Canivez, 2, p. 317.

Fieux in 1297¹¹⁷ – but once a convent had been established, election was the norm. The procedure to be followed at Sigena was set down in the convent's rule: the whole chapter was to choose three of the *sanctiores* [more holy] sisters, and these were in turn to select five members of the chapter; the prioress was to be elected by these five, and a majority decision among them was to be accepted.¹¹⁸ Election *per compromissum* was of course a method commonly used in religious houses, but in 1298 the sisters of Beaulieu were given the freedom to choose a prioress 'vel per modum scrutini, vel per modum compromissi, vel demum alio justo modo, quo potest et debet electio celebrari'.¹¹⁹ At Sigena the election was always to be made with the counsel of the Castellan of Amposta, but elsewhere in the Hospital the choice of a prioress was usually subject only to confirmation by the head of the province.¹²⁰ At Beaulieu there was, however, the further regulation that a candidate had to be chosen and presented to the Prior of Saint-Gilles for confirmation within 40 days; if this was not done, the right of nomination passed to the prior.¹²¹ The head of a province was also sometimes empowered to intervene if there was a disputed election. In 1207 Innocent III decreed that if the sisters of Sigena could not agree on a candidate they were to summon the Castellan of Amposta, and he was to settle the issue with the counsel of the diocesan.¹²² In 1250 the Castellan was similarly empowered to intervene in disputed elections at Alguaire.¹²³ A disputed election did occur at Sigena in 1291, when the rival candidates were Teresa Jiménez de Urrea and Mary Martínez de Luna. The matter should have been decided by the Castellan of Amposta and the Bishop of Lérida, but both Jaime II and Boniface VIII became involved and in 1295 the pope appointed judges delegate to hear the case.¹²⁴

Although there were occasions when there was secular interference in the election of prioresses,¹²⁵ it is difficult to discover whether senior officials of military orders, unused to elections within convents, ever sought to suppress the right of a female house to choose its head. There was certainly disagreement between Sigena and the Castellan of Amposta in 1226 about the electoral process: the convent

¹¹⁷ CH, 3, pp. 714–17, no. 4375.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1, pp. 532–47, no. 859; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 18–40, no. 8.

¹¹⁹ ['The election should be held either through scrutiny, or through compromise, or by any other just method by which an election can and ought to be conducted'] CH, 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, no. 5.

¹²¹ CH, 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413; at Alguaire a time limit of 15 days was imposed in 1330: Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, p. 17.

¹²² Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 78–80, no. 43.

¹²³ CH, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 3, pp. 624, 640–41, 646, 648, 672, 683, 685, nos 4227, 4236–7, 4249, 4254, 4291, 4311, 4318; Ubieto Arteta, *Monasterio de Sigena*, pp. 40–42.

¹²⁵ In 1305, for example, the Aragonese King Jaime II put forward a candidate for San Vicente de Junqueres: Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *Santiago en Aragón*, p. 134.

claimed that the rule of Saint Augustine should be followed, while the Castellan asserted that the election should be in accordance with the rule and constitution of the Hospital.¹²⁶ But the Castellan was not denying the sisters' right to choose their prioress. The only known attempt to challenge the right of election occurred at Aconbury, but that happened at a time when the foundress was seeking to sever the house's links with the Hospitallers.¹²⁷ The right of election seems in fact to have been generally accepted: it was perhaps felt that, as they participated to only a very limited extent in the military orders' activities which necessitated a strict centralization of control, women's convents could be allowed a greater degree of independence than was permissible in male houses.

Male preceptors or commanders who were nominated for female convents were not elected, but there were some modifications of the normal processes of appointment. Although the Castellan of Amposta in 1226 decreed that the preceptor of Sigena, like other preceptors, should be nominated in the provincial chapter, the appointment was to be made with the counsel of the Prioress of Sigena; and at Alguaire the prioress was allowed to select a brother to act as commander, and the Castellan of Amposta was obliged to accept her candidate, unless he already held the post of commander elsewhere.¹²⁸

As has been seen, the leading authorities of military orders often sought to control admissions to female houses by setting limits on the size of convents.¹²⁹ These restrictions, which are not commonly encountered in male houses of the military orders, were obviously imposed for economic reasons: at Beaulieu, for example, a maximum was decreed 'ad evitandum importunam et importabilem multitudinem sororum ultra ipsius loci proprias facultates'.¹³⁰ The same purpose may lie behind the decree of 1187 which forbade the Prioress of Sigena to admit new sisters without the counsel of the Castellan of Amposta: at that time there was no fixed limit on numbers.¹³¹ By contrast, regulations compiled in 1298 allowed the Prioress of Beaulieu to accept recruits merely with the counsel of members of her convent, but in these regulations an upper limit on numbers was imposed.¹³² In

¹²⁶ Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 156–7, no. 104; *CH*, 2, pp. 348–9, no. 1833.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 500–501, no. 2140.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 348–9, 691–3, nos 1833, 2528; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 156–7, no. 104.

¹²⁹ Above, p. 58.

¹³⁰ ['To avoid getting an unsuitable and unsupportable multitude of sisters, beyond the means of the place:'] *CH*, 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, no. 5.

¹³² *CH*, 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413. At Alguaire admissions were to be made with the counsel of the Castellan de Amposta, even though an upper limit on numbers was imposed. This may be explained by the fact that regulations concerning Alguaire were partly based on those governing Sigena: *ibid.*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528.

some instances, however, it was also thought advisable to define the powers of superior officials and curb their freedom of action. The Castellan of Amposta was not allowed to impose sisters on Sigena or Alguaire, and the Hospitaller prior was obliged to obtain the prioress's consent before placing more sisters at Fieux than were normally allowed.¹³³ Apart from these regulations affecting particular Hospitaller officials, a more general ruling about the right to admit sisters was included among the decrees issued by the general chapter of the Hospital in 1262. Its purpose was to repeal an earlier ruling by which bailiffs and brothers had been forbidden to receive sisters without the special licence of the grand master: in future, provincial priors were to have the right to admit women.¹³⁴ The reason given for the change was that the order might benefit if these officials were allowed to accept female recruits; but the significance of the ruling is obscure. The earlier prohibition, the text of which does not survive, seems to have applied only to male officials; the rulings do not therefore indicate a major change in the Hospital's attitude towards the admission of women. The decrees may have referred to districts where there were no sisters' convents and where women who wanted to join the Hospital would be admitted by male officials and attached to male houses; this would explain why those admitted after 1262 by priors were not to be 'in juvenili aut suspecta etate' [of young or suspect age]. The first decree may have been related to attempts to ensure that sisters lived only in the convents established for them, and its repeal may have been occasioned by the realization of the disadvantages of this policy. If this interpretation is correct, neither ruling was directly concerned with the admission of recruits to female convents.

Since sisters' convents were usually dependent on the help of brothers, rights concerning the admission of male recruits also required definition. Information is provided mainly by Hospitaller sources, but these again are not free from ambiguity. At the time of the establishment of Sigena, the Castellan of Amposta decreed that

ipsos autem fratres, quos priorissa duxerit sibi necessarios, semper cum consilio magistri accipiat et ipse eos illi tradat atque concedat ... non liceat eidem priorisse ... fratrem vel confratrem sine consilio magistri recipere'.¹³⁵

¹³³ Ibid., 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; 2, pp. 76–7, 691–3, nos 1272, 2528; 4, pp. 173–4, no. 4801; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, 78–80, 82–4, nos 5, 43, 46; Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, p. 17.

¹³⁴ *CH*, 3, p. 48, no. 3039, ch. 22.

¹³⁵ ['The prioress is always to receive those brothers whom she decides are necessary on the advice of the master (that is, the castellan), and he is to give and concede them to her ... the prioress is not permitted to receive a brother or an associate brother without the master's advice:'] *ibid.*, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, no. 5.

Similar statements were made when Alguaire was founded in the mid-thirteenth century.¹³⁶ The situation is perhaps clarified by the wording of a further document concerning Sigena which was issued by the grand master in 1207:

de fratribus eiusdem domus statuimus et sancimus ut illos quos priorissa viderit sibi utiles et necessarios in baiulia Emposte postulet eos a magistro, qui ei quod ipsa voluerit dummodo commendatores non sint sine difficultate aliqua tribuat et concedat.¹³⁷

It seems that a distinction should be drawn between the admission of new male recruits and the transfer of existing brothers to women's convents. The Castellan was to allow the transfer of brothers to sisters' houses, provided that they did not hold office elsewhere, but the Prioresses of Sigena and Alguaire apparently also had the right to admit male postulants with the counsel of the Castellan. In practice the Prioress of Sigena is certainly known to have negotiated the admission of male recruits.¹³⁸ The Prioress of Beaulieu, on the other hand, was not allowed this power. In the regulations drawn up in 1298 it was stated that if she required brothers the Preceptor of Cahors should admit suitable persons and bestow the habit on them.¹³⁹

In a few cases there were restrictions on the acquisition of property as well as on the admission of new members, but these were of only minor significance. When the Calatravan house of San Felices de los Barrios was founded, it was decreed that if a man and his wife both made their profession in the Order, three-quarters of any donation made by them should pass to the convent of Calatrava and only a quarter to San Felices.¹⁴⁰ A condition of a different kind was imposed when Sigena was established: immovable property given by recruits outside the kingdom of Aragon, but inside the Castellany of Amposta, was to be under the control of the Castellan, provided that he was ready to assign the convent suitable rights elsewhere in exchange: the intention was presumably to ensure that the property subject to Sigena was not too scattered.¹⁴¹

Those who administered a convent's property were normally responsible to the head of the house,¹⁴² but – like their male counterparts – those in charge of women's

¹³⁶ CH, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528.

¹³⁷ ['We decree and lay down regarding the brothers of the same house that the prioress should ask the master (i.e. the castellan) for those in the castellany of Amposta whom she regards as useful and necessary to her. He is to give and concede her what she wishes without any difficulty, provided they are not commanders':] *ibid.*, 2, pp. 76–7, no. 1272; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 82–4, no. 46.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 147–8, 175–6, nos 96, 118.

¹³⁹ CH, 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413.

¹⁴⁰ Manrique, 4, pp. 170–71.

¹⁴¹ CH, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, no. 5. The possessions of Sigena, were, however, more scattered than those of male houses; on Sigena's property, see Ubieto Arteta, *Monasterio de Sigena*, ch. 3.

¹⁴² There were some partial exceptions: see *Cartulary of Buckland*, ed. Weaver, pp. 11–13, nos 15, 16.

convents could not always dispose freely of rights and possessions. The Prioresses of Sigena and Alguaire required the Castellan of Amposta's assent for any alienation of property, and the abbess of San Felices de los Barrios was similarly forbidden to dispose of the convent's possessions without the consent of the master of Calatrava.¹⁴³ On the other hand, patrons of female convents were sometimes anxious to ensure that the property which they had assigned for the maintenance of a community was not used for other purposes by male superiors. In 1219 García Gutiérrez and his wife decreed that none of the possessions of San Felices de los Barrios should be detached from it by the master and knights of Calatrava, and when Alfonso IX's daughter Sancha gave property to Santa Eufemia de Cozuelos in 1270 she imposed the condition that the house should not be deprived of the revenues of this property by any master or commander of the Order of Santiago; in practice, however, the master took little notice of this restriction.¹⁴⁴

To ensure that property was being efficiently administered and that rules were being properly observed, convents of sisters were normally subjected to visitation and correction by superior officials.¹⁴⁵ In most cases the custom of visitation is mentioned without elaboration,¹⁴⁶ but according to a document drawn up in 1291 the visitation of the Hospitaller house of Penne in Italy was to be conducted annually by the Prior of Capua, who was to be accompanied by two or three brothers; and it was not to last more than two or three days.¹⁴⁷ The powers of correction exercised by superior officials are similarly rarely explained in detail, but several definitions have survived of the rights which the Castellan of Amposta enjoyed at Sigena. In 1187 it was decreed that an unsuitable prioress could be removed by the Castellan, but only with the counsel of the convent of Sigena; and if an offence was committed in the convent which the prioress could not correct, the Castellan was to be called in, though he could not expel a sister without consulting the prioress.¹⁴⁸ Twenty years later Innocent III ruled that if an offender could not be corrected by the prioress and convent, the matter was to be referred not only to the Castellan but also to the diocesan, but in a document issued only a few months later by the grand master it was again stated that in these circumstances the Castellan should act.¹⁴⁹ It was at the same time decreed that if the offence merited deposition or expulsion, the castellan should give judgement with the counsel of the convent of Sigena. The

¹⁴³ CH, 2, pp. 348–9, 691–3, nos 1833, 2528; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 156–7, no. 104; O'Callaghan, p. 43, n. 5; see also *Cartulary of Buckland*, ed. Weaver, p. 110, no. 190.

¹⁴⁴ Manrique, 4, pp. 170–71; Lomax, p. 81.

¹⁴⁵ In this they did not differ from male houses.

¹⁴⁶ CH, 2, pp. 872–4, no. 2923; 3, pp. 714–17, 737–40, nos 4375, 4413.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 3, pp. 590–91, no. 4154.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, no. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 1, pp. 78–80, 82–4, nos 43, 46; CH, 2, pp. 76–7, no. 1272.

grand master's ruling also reveals that the Castellan did not enjoy sole authority concerning the removal of male officials from Sigena, for it was stipulated that brothers should be removed at the request of the prioress. Only fragmentary evidence has survived about the judicial powers wielded by male superiors over other houses of sisters, but at least in the Hospital a further check on female convents was provided by the provincial chapter. Hospitaller prioresses, like the heads of male houses, were obliged to attend the annual chapter of their province, and were expected to report there on the state of their houses: in 1308, for example, the Prioress of Fieux was instructed to submit a report to the provincial prior at the provincial chapter.¹⁵⁰

It was also at the provincial chapters of the leading military orders that responsions were paid by the heads of convents. These consisted of a portion of a house's revenues and were used partly for expenses incurred by the head of a province and partly as a subsidy for the struggle against the infidel. Hospitaller sources show that convents of sisters in that order were not completely exempt from this obligation. In 1187 the Prioress of Sigena was asked to contribute *secundum quod sibi visum fuerit*, and this ruling was repeated in 1207 and 1226.¹⁵¹ But usually, as with male houses, a fixed obligation was imposed upon communities of sisters. Alguaire was expected to surrender, with certain exceptions, a tenth of its revenues.¹⁵² Other houses paid fixed sums of money: at Beaulieu, for example, the amount was 21 *livres* a year.¹⁵³ But the Hospital appears usually to have obtained only limited financial assistance from its female convents. The amount due from Fieux in 1297 was only half a mark, and 30 years earlier the master of the Hospital had complained that the property subject to the sisters of Alguaire was contributing less than it had when it formed part of a male commandery.¹⁵⁴ Of Buckland it was said in 1338 that the brethren of the Hospital gained nothing from it.¹⁵⁵

The Hospitaller authorities, on the other hand, were themselves often placed under an obligation to provide assistance, if necessary, to convents of sisters. In the agreement reached between the Castellan of Amposta and the Aragonese Queen Sancha in 1187 about the foundation of Sigena it was stated that

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 4, pp. 173–4, no. 4801. According to a document dated in the year 1227 the Prioress of Sigena was exempted from the obligation of attending the chapter of the Castellany of Amposta, but it is apparently a forgery; Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, p. 170, no. 113, and *Monasterio de Sigena*, p. 39.

¹⁵¹ ['As seemed best to her:'] Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, 82–4, 156–7, nos 5, 43, 104; *CH*, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835; 2, pp. 76–7, 348–9, nos 1272, 1833. [Recent research indicates rather that these payments related to responsions the prioress owed for a commandery she was personally granted in the Priory of Auvergne.]

¹⁵² Ibid., 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528; Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, p. 17.

¹⁵³ *CH*, 3, pp. 737–40, no. 4413.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 3, pp. 150, 714–17, nos 3243, 4375.

¹⁵⁵ Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

si vero predicta domus aliquo casu nimia inopia laboraverit, sicut casualiter contingere solet, sit in providentia magistri eis subvenire et earum inopiam misericorditer sublevare.¹⁵⁶

In 1250 the Castellan of Amposta was similarly committed to giving aid to Alguaire if the convent – because of crop failures or for other reasons – lacked the necessary revenues.¹⁵⁷ Financial hardship was of course not uncommon in Western nunneries,¹⁵⁸ and evidence is not lacking of difficulties in houses subject to the military orders. In 1308 the revenues of Fieux were said to be inadequate for the maintenance of the sisters and for building work which was necessary there.¹⁵⁹ In 1229 the sisters of Buckland were complaining to Gregory IX that the Vicar of Perreton was taking such a large proportion of the revenues of the church there that they could not support themselves from what was left; and when a survey of Hospitaller lands in England was compiled in 1338 it was admitted that the property belonging to the sisters of Buckland – then estimated at an annual value of £122 10s 0d – was insufficient for their maintenance and for other necessary expenses: the house had to depend on alms and assistance from friends.¹⁶⁰ Financial support was sometimes given by sisters' families,¹⁶¹ but on various occasions the Hospitallers themselves had to provide subsidies and pensions. At the end of the twelfth century the Hospitaller prior Gilbert of Vere assigned the sisters of Buckland an annual pension of 100s, to be paid out of the revenue of the manor of Rainham.¹⁶² Towards the middle of the thirteenth century a later prior granted them a pension of 38 marks 12s 8d, to be received from the preceptor of Buckland, although this payment appears to have been made at least in part in exchange for lands belonging to the sisters; and in 1329 a further pension of 40s a year was assigned to them.¹⁶³ The male house at Buckland was of course also maintaining the seneschal and chaplains who were employed in the sisters' convent. It is not surprising that the

¹⁵⁶ ['But if the aforesaid house labours under excessive need, by some mischance, as sometimes tends to happen, may it be in the master's (that is, the castellan's) providence to help them and to mercifully relieve their need:'] Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 11–14, no. 5; *CH*, 1, pp. 520–21, no. 835.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 691–3, no. 2528.

¹⁵⁸ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries* (Cambridge, 1922), ch. 5; Philibert Schmitz, *Histoire de l'ordre de Saint Benoît*, vol. 7 (Maredsous, 1956), p. 87.

¹⁵⁹ *CH*, 4, pp. 173–4, no. 4801.

¹⁶⁰ *Cartulary of Buckland*, ed. Weaver, p. 9, no. 13; Larking and Kemble, p. 20.

¹⁶¹ Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, pp. 55–6, no. 22; *Close Rolls, 1231–1234* (London, 1905), p. 165; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office. Edward II. 1307–1313* (London, 1894), p. 385.

¹⁶² *Cartulary of the Knights of St John in England*, ed. Gervers, vol. 1, p. 570, no. 961; Hugo, *History of Buckland*, pp. 94–5, no. 5.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 98, no. 12; *Cartulary of Buckland*, ed. Weaver, p. 14, no. 18; *Cartulary of the Knights of St John in England*, ed. Gervers, vol. 1, p. 571, no. 961; Larking and Kemble, p. 205.

convent at Buckland was described in 1338 as being an *onus* and *gravamen*, providing an additional drain on resources which had long been inadequate for the order's needs.¹⁶⁴ Nor is it remarkable that attempts were made to escape from the responsibility of subsidising Hospitaller sisters. As early as 1202 the Aragonese king agreed that the Castellan of Amposta should not be held liable for Sigena's debts; and in 1330 the grand master annulled the clause concerning aid which had been included in the foundation charter of Alguaire.¹⁶⁵

Yet although houses of sisters might be a burden to their male colleagues, only one attempt to suppress a female house is recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This occurred in 1267 when for financial reasons the master of the Hospital sought the pope's permission to revoke the grant of Hospitaller property which had been made in 1250 for the establishment of Alguaire.¹⁶⁶ Women's houses participated to only a very limited extent in the work and activities of the military orders, but there was little challenge to their survival. The sisters themselves, although their functions and way of life differed from those of their male counterparts, were in turn usually ready to accept the authority of their male superiors. In the later thirteenth century there was tension between Sigena and the Castellan of Amposta, who complained that the sisters were refusing to obey him,¹⁶⁷ but the only female house which actually severed its links with a military order before 1300 was that at Aconbury. At the end of the thirteenth century women who wished to lead a religious life were also still forging links with male houses of the orders. Although the Hospital had sought to ensure that sisters lived only in the convents established for them, this policy was apparently abandoned, and in orders such as the Temple, which had no houses for women, the practice seems to have continued unchallenged. Despite the fears expressed in the rules of some military orders, contact with women was not in fact kept at an absolute minimum: the needs and pressures to which the orders were subject ensured that ties of various kinds were established and maintained.

¹⁶⁴ ['An oppressive burden':] *ibid.*, p. 19; see also *Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office. Edward III. 1339–1345* (London, 1901), pp. 124–5.

¹⁶⁵ Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1, p. 68, no. 33; *CH*, 2, p. 13, no. 1155; Miret y Sans, *Alguayre*, p. 18.

¹⁶⁶ *CH*, 3, p. 150, no. 3243.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3, pp. 536–7, 620, nos 4040, 4218; Ubieto Arteta, *Monasterio de Sigena*, pp. 39–44.

Chapter 3

Men and Women of the Hospitaller, Templar and Teutonic Orders: Twelfth to Fourteenth Centuries^{*}

Francesco Tommasi

Narrative Sources and Origins

The extensive discussion of the obscure origins of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem began with tales related from the twelfth century onwards by the Hospitallers themselves or by others close to them. These accounts contained commonplace stories combined with elements of fantasy, and they betrayed an apologetic sentiment which may have derived from a deep insecurity within an institution which, unlike some others, lacked any historically and legally proven act of foundation.¹

Historians have sought the origins of the Hospital's female branch in the most authoritative source, the chronicle of William Archbishop of Tyre who died between 1184 and 1186. The relevant passage was, intentionally perhaps, somewhat unclear. In the eleventh century, according to William, various Italian merchants from Amalfi founded the Benedictine monastery of Saint Mary of the Latins in Jerusalem before the first crusade. The female monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene, known later as Saint Mary Major, and the *xenodochium* of Saint John the Almoner, the future hospital of Saint John the Baptist, were situated close to each other and separated by a street.² Both were subject to the jurisdiction of the Benedictine Abbot

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¹ Rudolf Hiestand, 'Die Anfänge der Johanniter', in *Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein and Manfred Hellmann (Sigmaringen, 1980), p. 32.

² Reinhold Röhricht, *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, 2 vols (Innsbruck, 1893–1904), 1, pp. 136–7 (no. 516); *Continuation de Guillaume de Tyr, de 1229 à 1261, dite du Manuscrit de Rothelin*, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1859), pp. 493–4.

of Saint Mary of the Latins and both were built with the help of the Amalfitan merchants for the care of female and male pilgrims respectively. William of Tyre wrote that when the crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1099 they were surprised to find in the female monastery a pious Roman noblewoman named Agnes who was its abbess, while in the male hospice was a certain Gerard, a man of commendable life who during the hostilities of 1099 had been charged by the abbot and monks with assisting the needy which he did devotedly.³ William's juxtaposition of the terms *xenodochium* or hospice and monastery or convent was presumably intentional; it implied practical collaboration and understanding between the male and female staff of the two charitable houses. William did not say that the female monastery depended on the male *xenodochium*;⁴ in fact the two institutions developed independently of each other.⁵

The explanation of William's text given later by Jacques de Vitry, who was Bishop of Acre and died in 1240, departed from it on at least two points.⁶ Firstly, he stated that Gerard, together with some 'honesti et religiosi viri', adopted a habit with a white cross and vowed to follow a rule which it is likely later became that of the Hospital; secondly, he claimed that the Abbess Agnes decided to follow the same rule and religious dress as Gerard.⁷ This second point can scarcely be considered

³ *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi Chronicon*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, 2 vols (Turnhout, 1986), 2, p. 817 (Book 18, ch. 5, lines 76–84): 'in monasterio feminarum inventa est abbatisse fungens officio quedam deo devota et sancta mulier Agnes nomine, nobilis secundum carnem, natione Romana ... et in xenodochio similiter repertus est quidam Geraldus, vir probate conversationis, qui pauperibus in eodem loco tempore hostilitatis de mandato abbatis et monachorum multo tempore devote servierat'.

⁴ Joseph Delaville le Roulx, 'Les Hospitalières de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem', *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres: Comptes Rendus*, ser. IV, 22 (1894), 138, reprinted in *idem*, *Mélanges sur l'ordre de S. Jean de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1910), no. 12; *CH*, 1, p. ccxxi; *idem*, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et à Chypre: 1100–1310* (Paris, 1904), 299, interprets William of Tyre's text as demonstrating an institutional dependence.

⁵ Röhrich, 1, pp. 84 (no. 327), 136–7 (no. 516); 2 pp. 17 (no. 265a), 40 (no. 623a), 51 (no. 791a), 64 (no. 1044a); 'Johannis Wirzburgensis Descriptio Terrae Sanctae', in T. Tobler, *Descriptiones Terrae sanctae ex saeculo VIII., IX., XII. et XV.* (Leipzig, 1874), pp. 102–92, 415–48, 159; see now also the new edition of the 'Descriptio' in *Peregrinationes tres: Saewulf, John of Würzburg, Theodoricus*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum*, continuatio medievalis, 139 (Turnhout, 1994); *Willelmi Tyrensis Chronicon*, 1, p. 445 (Book 9, ch. 18, lines 54–6). For Saint Mary Major at Acre, U. Berlière, 'Les anciens Monastères bénédictins de Terre-Sainte', *Revue Bénédictine*, 5 (1888), 437–46, 502–12, 546–62; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus: c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), pp. 34, 37, 240–41, 247.

⁶ On Jacques de Vitry's use of William of Tyre, P. Funk, *Jacob von Vitry, Leben und Werke* (Leipzig, 1909), pp. 133–5.

⁷ 'Iacobi a Vitriaco Historia Orientalis seu Hierosolymitana', in J. Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos sive Orientalium Expeditionum et regni Francorum Hierosolymitani Historia* (Hanover, 1611), p. 1082: 'vir quidam sanctae vitae, et probatae religionis nomine Gerardus, qui longo tempore de mandato Abbatis in praedicto hospitali pauperibus devote

as even a loose interpretation of William's text, but Jacques had an erudite, ecclesiastical interest in the Hospitaller sisters and other women's orders which may have derived from his own pastoral responsibilities.⁸ Jacques would have been well informed about the existence within his own diocese of a female Hospitaller house in Acre documented as early as 1219, by which time he had already been the town's bishop for a year.⁹ Given his concern with the origins of the Hospital's female branch, he turned, though not without some manipulation, to William of Tyre as the source he considered most reliable.

Jacques de Vitry's account of the Hospital's beginnings was not original and was in some ways misleading, as were his views on the origins of the German hospital of Santa Maria Alamannorum in Jerusalem. The claims for the direct descent from this German hospice, established before 1143, of the Teutonic Order, which was founded in about 1191, were highly dubious. Jacques, who was in a position to secure information directly from the Teutonic headquarters in Acre,¹⁰ stated that an unspecified German, an 'honestus et religiosus vir Teutonicus', who lived in Jerusalem with his wife, constructed at his own expense both a hospice for German-speaking poor, sick and pilgrims, and also an oratory next to it dedicated to the Virgin.¹¹ Much later, in the second half of the fourteenth century, Jean Lang, Abbot and chronicler of the Flemish monastery of Saint Bertin, re-examined the subject within the context of the comparative history of the military orders in Christendom. He relied mainly on Jacques de Vitry but introduced some variations into his

ministraverat, adiunctis sibi quibusdam honestis et religiosis viris habitum regularem suscepit, et vestibus suis albam crucem exterius affigens in pectore, regule salutari et honestis institutionibus facta sollemniter professione, seipsum obligavit. Cui etiam mulier quaedam Agnes nomine, Romana natione, nobilis carne, sed nobilior sanctitate, que in monasterio mulierum vicem gesserat Abbatissae, in ministerio pauperum adiuncta eandem regulam, et humilitatis habitum votive suscepit.'

⁸ Cf. Jacques de Vitry, *Historia occidentalis*, ed. John F. Hinnebusch (Fribourg, 1972), pp. 116–18, 120–21, 130, 134–5, 144–51; *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry (1160/70–1240) évêque de Saint-Jean-d'Acre*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Leiden, 1960), pp. 72–3, 75; H. Grundmann, *Movimenti religiosi nel Medioevo* (trans: Bologna, 1980), pp. 170–71, 175–6, 179–81, 338.

⁹ Röhricht, 1, p. 245 (no. 923): the bishopric possessed property not far from the 'domus Hospitalis, in qua habitant sorores Hospitalis'. Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Occidentalis*, pp. 118, 268, mentioned the female Cistercian monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene at Acre.

¹⁰ Marie-Luise Favreau, *Studien zur Frühgeschichte des Deutschen Ordens* (Stuttgart, 1974), p. 12.

¹¹ *Iacobi a Vitriaco Historia Orientalis*, p. 1085: 'inspiravit divina clementia cuidam honesto et religioso viro Teutonico, qui in civitate cum uxore sua morabatur, quatenus quoddam Xenodochium de bonis suis construeret, in quo pauperibus et infirmis Teutonicis hospitalitatem exhiberet. Constituentibus autem ad ipsum ratione commercii linguae et noti sibi idiomatis, de gente illa multis pauperibus et peregrinis, de consensu et voluntate domini Patriarchae, quoddam oratorium composuit iuxta praedictum hospitale in honore beatae Dei genetricis Mariae.'

account. He too attributed the foundation of the German hospital in Jerusalem to a *Teuthonicus* and his wife, and he added that the wife administered an adjacent hospital for German women, *mulieres Alemanne*.¹² That would have created a variety of double house which would have explained the origins of the female branch of the Teutonic Order, but this story was entirely uncorroborated since there was no evidence for a hospice for German women pilgrims in Jerusalem or anywhere else in Latin Syria, while Pope Celestine II made no mention of any specifically female house when placing the German hospital in Jerusalem under the Hospitallers' tutelage in 1143.¹³ Jean Lang may simply have invented the story of a separate female house in the twelfth century because he knew of hospitals founded by married couples in his own time.¹⁴

Female Associates: Organizational Aspects

The narrative sources provided only very limited information, yet when William of Tyre was writing, between 1169 and c. 1184, the relationship between the male and female elements within the Hospital's *domus* and hospitals in both East and West was already a reality which reflected long-accepted practice. The statutes of c. 1181 concerning assistance to expectant mothers in the Jerusalem hospital obviously demonstrated the existence of an organized female presence in obstetric wards;¹⁵

¹² *Iohannis Longi Chronica Monasterii Sancti Bertini*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum*, 25 (Hanover, 1880), p. 796: 'exemplo Hospitalarium ad pauperes et infirmos Teuthonicos recipiendos quidam Teuthonicus cum uxore sue hospitale construxit et capellam in honore beate Marie virginis gloriose ... Uxor quoque eius in aliud hospitale seorsum et iuxta illud mulieribus Alemannis pietatis officia ministrabat'. On Lang's sources, Marian Tumler, *Der Deutsche Orden im Werden, Wachsen und Wirken bis 1400* (Montreal, 1955), pp. 22–4 n. 1.

¹³ *Papsturkunden für Kirchen im Heiligen Lande*, ed. Rudolf Hiestand (Göttingen, 1985), pp. 169–70 (no. 50), 171–2 (no. 51): only a prior and *servientes* were mentioned in the German hospice. Cf. Favreau, pp. 15–16 *passim*; on the archaeology, D. Bahat and R. Reich, 'Une église médiévale dans le Quartier juif de Jérusalem', *Revue Biblique*, 43 (1986), 111–14.

¹⁴ Examples from the Teutonic Order in K. Lampe, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschordensschwester', *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 16 (1967), 48; cf. Forey, Chapter 2, pp. 47, 51, 53.

¹⁵ *CH*, 1, p. 426 (no. 627). For female oblation in a Hospitaller house in Syria, text of 1151 in Jean Richard, 'Le Comté de Tripoli dans les Chartes du Fonds des Porcellet', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 130 (1972), 364–5; cf. Röhrich, 1, p. 133 (no. 503: 1173); in about 1175 women were certainly working in the Hospital's Jerusalem hospital: *Johannis Wirzburgensis*, p. 159; above, pp. 71–72. Cf. *Gauteri Mahap De Nugis Curialium*, ed. F. Latella, 2 vols (Parma, 1990), p. 116: 'Hac fama patrimonia sua multi multaque conferebant eis [sc. Hospitalaribus], seque plurimi mancipabant ibi servire debilibus et infirmis'.

those elements would have been in existence for some time. On the antiquity of the phenomenon of *mulieres* attached to male houses, there was information in the Latin Rule of the Templars which reflected a situation datable no later than the fourth decade of the century. Articles 53 and 54 concerning lay associates and *sorores* were apparently not part of the original text of the Rule as approved at the Council of Troyes in 1129 but were later additions to it.¹⁶ Those who revised the Latin Rule did not agree with the way in which lay association with the Order had functioned, and so article 53 decreed that those married couples or *fratres coniugati* who had acquired the *fraternitas* of the Order were no longer to be allowed to live in the same *domus* with professed brethren vowed to chastity.¹⁷ Article 54 prohibited any further reception of *sorores*,¹⁸ which showed that the Temple had not previously been closed to women; the article was not always observed in practice and houses of female Templars did later appear in various parts of Europe.¹⁹

The French translation of the Templars' Rule, datable to c. 1140,²⁰ repeated the earlier Latin version which implied that the prohibition on the association of married couples was scrupulously observed, but the text was vague and there is no detailed information as to how far it was implemented. In fact, article 53 left room for doubt about the nature of the *domus* that married couples were forbidden to share with the professed brethren, since it did not clarify whether *domus* meant a single building in which professed brethren lived or, instead, a complex of buildings which constituted a commandery. However, since there were arrangements which contemplated that widowers or widows surviving from associated couples might eventually live in a Templar commandery, the term *domus* was presumably intended to mean a single building. Thus in 1167 Robaldo Marabotto and his wife Giusta gave themselves and some goods to the Templar house of San Calogero at Albenga in Liguria, and it was agreed that as long as they were both alive they would continue to live in their own house; on the death of one, the other would move into the commandery for the rest

¹⁶ The revision is demonstrated in G. Schnürer, *Die ursprüngliche Templerregel* (Freiburg i. Br., 1903), pp. 112–17; G. de Valous, 'Quelques Observations sur la toute primitive Observance des Templiers', in *Mélanges Saint Bernard* (Dijon, 1954), pp. 38–9.

¹⁷ Schnürer, p. 148: 'Hoc enim iniustum consideramus, ut cum fratribus Deo castitatem promittentibus fratres huiusmodi in una eademque domo maneant.'

¹⁸ Ibid.: 'Sorores quidem amplius periculosum est coadunare, quia antiquus hostis femineo consortio complures expulit a recto tramite paradisi. Ideoque fratres carissimi, ut integritatis flos inter vos semper appareat, hac consuetudine amodo uti non licet'.

¹⁹ For Mühlen, *Jean XXII (1316–1334): Lettres Communes*, ed. G. Mollat (Paris, 1904–1947), 5, no. 18,845 (13 January 1324). At least from 1293 near or in the Templar complex at San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini at Florence was a female house apparently of the same order: G. Richa, *Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese fiorentine*, vol. 3 (Florence, 1755), p. 295; W. and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt a. M., 1955), p. 401.

²⁰ Henri de Curzon, *La Règle du Temple* (Paris, 1886), pp. 68–9; on the possibility of dating the French text, Marion Melville, *La Vie des Templiers* (Paris, 1974), pp. 50–55; Schnürer, pp. 39–41, proposes a translation made between 1163 and 1180.

of his or her life.²¹ This constituted the *traditio animae et corporis*, a contract of oblation involving both the person and a gift;²² that contract resulted in a male or female oblate or donat entering the Order by taking the religious habit and making a partial or complete profession.²³ This happened to Robaldo Marabotto in 1173 after his wife died;²⁴ but if he had died first, his wife Giusta would have entered the commandery. Such contracts could, however, be annulled if at the time of entering the house of a military order a person had not taken any vow, full or partial; if the contract contained some legal fault; or if there existed some other valid reason for breaking it. Women could certainly leave a Templar or Hospitaller house and return to secular life.²⁵

Lay oblature did not necessarily result in a person entering an order by taking the habit, since quite frequently people merely offered their body, their soul and a gift according to the ritual formula, without committing themselves by promising to

²¹ P. Accame, *Notizie e Documenti inediti sui Templari e Gerosolimitani in Liguria* (Finalborgo, 1902), p. 47: 'si Iusta uxor tua ante te decesserit tunc debes dimittere secularem domum et habitare in Sancto Calocero in vita tua ... et sicut te deruerit et Iusta uxor tua si post te viscerit.'

²² Élisabeth Magnou, 'Oblature, Classe chevaleresque et Servage dans les Maisons méridionales du Temple au XIIe siècle', *Annales du Midi*, 73 (1961), 382–95; A. Trudon des Ormes, *Étude sur les Possessions de l'Ordre du Temple en Picardie* (Amiens, 1892), pp. 244–5, 286–7, concerning a *conversa*; cf. below, pp. 77, 87–8.

²³ In 1169 a husband and wife confirming a donation to the Templars of Seriel reserved the right to take their habit when they might wish and with no further financial obligation: Trudon des Ormes, *Étude sur les Possessions*, pp. 244–5. In 1289 a *mulier* wore the Hospital's habit without taking a vow of chastity: *Registres de Nicolas IV*, ed. E. Langlois (Paris, 1886–1905), no. 964. A whole family in southern France gave itself in *traditio* to the Temple, of which the father and son later became *fratres* and the mother a *monialis*: *CT*, 1, pp. 237–8 (no. 371). In 1198 a future Templar *preceptorix* made a full profession in Catalonia: below, pp. 87–8.

²⁴ Accame, pp. 47–8.

²⁵ The validity of a donation to the (Hospitaller?) monastery at Sovereto in Puglia was successfully impugned by a layman in 1213 since the woman 'asserebat dolosam fuisse oblationem et velamen nigrum quod ipsa oblatione suscepserat, quia illud postea numquam portavit ... in ipsa ecclesia permansit aut ut aliqua ex sororibus beneficium de conventu monasterii suscepit': G. Valente, *Feudalesimo e Feudatari in sette secoli di Storia di un Comune pugliese: Terlizzi 1073–1779*, vol. 2 (Molfetta, 1983), pp. 179–80. In 1302 a widow had, for unspecified reasons, left the Templar house at Seriel where, in return for goods she gave it, she had received sufficient *victum et vestitum* and was to spend the rest of her life: Trudon des Ormes, *Étude sur les Possessions*, pp. 251–2. A widow protested that she was induced to promise to enter the Hospital's hospital at Genoa not of her own will but 'maliciose et quasi violenter': C. Marchesini and G. Sperati, 'Ospedali genovesi nel Medioevo', *Atti della Società ligure di Storia Patria*, new ser. 31 part 1 (1981), 132, 313. Similarly at Buckland a woman was received 'per preceptum viri sui et contra voluntatem suam': Alan Forey, 'Recruitment to the Military Orders (twelfth to mid-fourteenth centuries)', *Viator*, 17 (1986), 152.

make a future profession. They swore on the Gospel to defend the order and its possessions, not to change to another order, and not to choose a different place of burial; that was sufficient to associate themselves with an order and so participate in its spiritual benefits of prayers, burial in the order's cemeteries and so forth. Sometimes an aspiring *consoror* or *confrater* took the precaution of requesting at the time of entry a guarantee against any future attempt to force them to take the habit against their will.²⁶ There were in fact at least two categories of lay associate: those who lived within a house of a military order in which they received food and clothing, and those who lived outside the house but enjoyed the order's protection while supporting themselves either from the land which they had donated to the order and which was returned to them in fief or from food and lodging provided by the order with which they had associated themselves.²⁷ Such arrangements allowed the military orders to enlarge their membership and to gain public support by extending their network of advantageous relationships with the lay world.

Contracts of oblature, while common in most regular orders, were particularly important to the Templars, the Hospitallers and the Teutonic brethren. The Templars' Latin Rule mentioned the Order's *sorores* but not the various types of *mulieres*, unmarried or widowed, who were also present in their houses,²⁸ and it did not specify the physical location which those women should occupy within the male houses. Their condition was probably comparable to that of the Hospitaller and

²⁶ Agustín Ubieta Arteta, *Documentos de Sigüenza*, 1 (Valencia, 1972), pp. 127–8 (no. 78): 'concedimus in domo Sexene vobis dompne Marie de Narbona et dompne Spagne vitam fratrum et sororum omnibus diebus vite vestre ... Concedimus etiam vobis et promittimus et convenimus quod nos nec magister Hospitalis non habeamus licentiam nec potentiam cogendi vos nec forçandi ad accipiendum habitum ordinis Hospitalis nisi ex vestra fuerit voluntate'. Cf. *ibid.*, nos 65, 146.

²⁷ Joaquín Miret y Sans, *Les Cases de Templiers y Hospitalers en Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1910), pp. 208, 212, 216; Magnou, 'Oblature', 381 *passim*; Riley-Smith, p. 245; G. Müller, *Die Familiaren des Deutschen Ordens* (Marburg, 1980), p. 48; Alan Forey, *The Templars in the 'Corona de Aragón'* (London, 1973), pp. 289, 376; H. Limburg, 'Schwestern, Halbschwestern und Halbbrüder des Deutschen Ordens im Mittelalter', in *Von Akkon bis Wien: Studien zur Deutschordensgeschichte vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert: Festschrift Marian Tumlner*, ed. Udo Arnold (Marburg, 1978), pp. 21–2; L. Tacchella, *Le 'Donate' nella Storia del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta* (Verona, 1987), *passim*; M. Gysseling, 'Les plus anciens Textes français non littéraires en Belgique et dans le Nord de la France', *Scriptorium*, 3 (1949), 192 (no. 3).

²⁸ The non-servile wife of a 'man' of the Temple incurred no religious obligation through her husband, but in 1279 one did become a *femina Templi* at Lagny-le-Sec near Senlis: Marie-Luise Bulst-Thiele, *Sacrae Domus Militiae Templi Hierosolymitani Magistri: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Templerordens 1118/19–1314* (Göttingen, 1974), p. 159 n. 1. Such cases often involved single women or couples with or without children granted by private persons to the Temple 'in dominium ad habendum et possidendum' for employment in its agrarian activities: *Cartulaires des Templiers de Douzens*, ed. Pierre Gérard and Elisabeth Magnou (Paris, 1965), pp. 44, 60, 70, 72, 107, 141, 149, 153, 177.

Teutonic *mulieres* whose lodgings were carefully kept separate from those of the brethren. The avoidance of any suspicious mingling of male and female religious was a concern for Church councils²⁹ and ecclesiastical authorities. Significantly, Pope Gregory IX in 1233 permitted the survival of the female Hospitaller house at Aconbury in Herefordshire only on condition that it could show that the Order had no male house in the immediate vicinity.³⁰ Even more telling were the statutes of the Teutonic Order, made in about 1250, in which article 31, modelled on article 54 of the Templars' Latin Rule, provided that women *consorores* or associates should have a residence separate from that of the brethren: 'domicilium speciale extra fratrum habitacionem'.³¹ A similar practice can perhaps be inferred from the Hospitaller statute of 1262 forbidding the reception of *sorores* of 'young or suspect age'.³² The late-fifteenth century hagiographer of Saint Toscana, who most probably lived in the twelfth century,³³ stated that, once widowed, she had been allowed to take the Hospitaller habit, perhaps as a *conversa*, and to live in a small cell beside to the church of the hospital of the Holy Sepulchre in Verona.³⁴ Similarly, next to the hospital at Genoa – *iuxta hospitale Janue* – was the lodging assigned by the Hospital to a certain Alasina if she were to outlive her husband, Garesio d'Altavilla, together with whom she became an associate of the Order in 1302; meanwhile both were to live with a *frater* in that Hospital's *xenodochium* at Gavi.³⁵

The dress worn by men and women associated with the orders served to demonstrate their status. The colours seem to have been the same for both professed brethren and sisters and for associated members, black for the Hospitallers and white for the Teutonic brethren. What distinguished the associated from the professed members was the cross, white for the Hospitallers and black for the Teutonic brethren, stitched onto their mantle. For fully professed brethren and sisters it had four arms and for the others it had three, which made it in effect a 'half' cross. So Garesio and Alasina at Genoa had, as Hospitaller associates, to wear the

²⁹ U. Berlière, 'Les Monastères doubles aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles', *Académie royale de Belgique: Classe de Lettres et de Sciences morales et politiques – Mémoires*, 11 fasc. 3 (1923), 5–6; S. Hilpisch, *Die Doppelklöster: Entstehung und Organisation* (Münster i. W., 1928), p. 80.

³⁰ Where there was a proven 'suspicion of vicinity' to a Hospitaller house, the papacy envisaged a gradual extinction of the female house: *CH*, 2, pp. 451–2 (no. 2047); cf. 457 (no. 2059), 472 (no. 2086), 500 (no. 2140), 513 (no. 2167); William Rees, *A History of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Wales and on the Welsh Border* (Cardiff, 1947), pp. 60–61 (without references).

³¹ *Die Statuten des Deutschen Ordens*, ed. Max Perlach (Halle, 1890), p. 52.

³² *CH*, 3, p. 48 (no. 3039).

³³ V. Cavallari, 'Considerazioni e Congetture sui tempi di Santa Toscana', *Studi Storici Veronesi* Luigi Simeoni, 24–5 (1974–75).

³⁴ *Acta Sanctorum: Iulii III* (Antwerp, 1723), p. 865; below, p. 86.

³⁵ Text in L. Tacchella, *I 'Donati' nella Storia del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta* (Verona, 1986), pp. 76–8.

three parts of the cross, the ‘tres partes crucis sive signum quod dicitur crocia’; if Garesio were to survive his wife, he would have to make a complete profession and thus adopt the full cross: ‘assumere totam crucem’.³⁶

In 1276 the widow Gerburg Schonweder and her children Peter and Matilde were received into the Teutonic house at Koblenz with the obligation of living in the same house and wearing the half cross – ‘sub habitu cum dimidia cruce’, and of observing chastity, according to the Order’s statutes;³⁷ article 32 of the Teutonic Rule stated that married or unmarried *familiares* were to wear the same colours as professed members but without the full cross: ‘vestes religiosi coloris deferent non cum integra cruce’.³⁸ That rule was based on article 53 of the Latin Rule of the Temple which showed that the only distinction between lay associates and professed brethren was in the colour of their dress; the *fratres coniugati*, the married couples, were not to wear the white dress worn by the full *fratres* but, like every *famulus* of the Temple, to wear clothes and a mantle, either of black or of the rough grey fabric known as *burella*.³⁹ The Templars adopted a red cross as late as 1147 when, according to tradition, Pope Eugenius III granted it to them.⁴⁰ Probably, as in the other two orders, the use of the T-shaped ‘half’ cross on the dress of the Templars’ male and female associates became common practice.

Terminological Questions

The different categories of lay religious attached to the houses of the military orders were described in many ways, the legislative and other documentary sources often failing to make significant distinctions. The terms *soror*, *consoror*, *conversa*, *oblata*, *donata*, *data*, *dedicata* and *reddita* were used indifferently to indicate women who were often similar in status. This imprecise and fluid terminology led

³⁶ Ibid., p. 77; the Hospitallers’ use of the ‘half’ cross is attested at the beginning of the thirteenth century: *De rebus Alsaticis ineuntis saeculi XIII*, ed. P. Jaffé, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores*, vol. 17 (Hanover, 1861), p. 235; *CH*, 4, p. 12 (no. 4542). It is not clear what type of cross was to be worn by the Bishop of Valania (Baniyas), who in 1197 promised the Hospitallers that he would wear ‘the sign of the cross according to the custom of the said brothers, from whose fellowship he had been taken when he was made bishop’ (*signum crucis iuxta consuetudinem dictorum fratrum, de quorum consortio episcopus factus fuit*): Röhrich, 1, p. 196 (no. 734). On the Hospital’s women ‘donats with the half cross’, Tacchella, *Le ‘Donate’, passim*.

³⁷ Müller, p. 50 (no. 193). On this type of cross worn by the Teutonic brethren in Syria, *L’Etoile de Eracles Empereur et la Conquête de la Terre d’Outremer*, in *Receuil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1859), p. 142.

³⁸ *Die Statuten*, ed. Perlach, p. 52.

³⁹ Schnürer, p. 148; cf. pp. 140–41.

⁴⁰ Bulst-Thiele, p. 38.

to confusion as to the various juridical and religious conditions of the women associates. The three main orders employed similar terminologies, following the practice in other orders and especially those of the Benedictine tradition.⁴¹ The *confratres*, *sorores*, *consorores* and *donati* of the three military orders were broadly similar. Hospitaller documents did not always distinguish clearly between *confratres* and *consorores* on the one hand and *donati* and *donate* on the other, so that in the late-thirteenth century the terms could be almost synonymous;⁴² in the same way, *soror* could have a meaning apparently similar to that of *conversa* and *dedicata*.⁴³

In the Teutonic Order, the juridical definition of the terms *Halbbrüder* or *semifratres* and *Halbschwestern* or *semisorores* was not entirely clear. *Consorores* were generally women who had not made a complete monastic profession, but cases in which *soror* and *consoror* were used synonymously were not unusual;⁴⁴ the same held true in Hospitaller and Templar texts from Catalonia.⁴⁵ The Templars' Latin rule spoke generically of married couples associated with the Order as *fratres coniugati* but then described them imprecisely as *fratres huiusmodi*, that is as 'brothers of such a type'.⁴⁶ The French translation sought to clarify such vagueness by defining the *fratres huiusmodi* as *tels confreres*.⁴⁷ The Templar documents used phrases such as *consoror*, *donata* and *conversa* interchangeably, so that the difference between them, or at least between the first two, was not always clear. Apart from cases in which *soror* was used in place of *donata* or *oblata*,⁴⁸ *consoror* and *donata* seem to have been equivalent terms in a document of 1234 concerning the entry into the Temple of a French couple as 'confratres et donati domus milicie Templi'.⁴⁹ However, when a Catalan defined herself in 1226 as a 'conversa et donata

⁴¹ G.-B. Mittarelli and A. Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 9 vols (Venice, 1755–73), 1, pp. 336–453, indicate the rich material illustrating, somewhat confusedly, the Benedictine terminology: see also D. Osheim, 'Conversion, Convent, and the Christian Life in Late Medieval Tuscany', *Speculum*, 58 (1983), 372–3.

⁴² Riley-Smith, pp. 242–6. In the second half of the fourteenth century in northern France the term *donatus* or *datus* took precedence, seemingly referring to various personal situations and several categories of lay members, while in the south the word *oblatus* was most common: A.-M. Legras, 'Les Effectifs de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem dans le Prieuré de France en 1373', *Revue Mabillon*, 60 (1984), 375–6; cf. below, p. 81, n. 53.

⁴³ Cf. below, p. 86.

⁴⁴ Detailed study in Müller, pp. 32–4.

⁴⁵ Miret y Sans, *Cases*, pp. 207–13, 222–3; Forey, *Templars*, pp. 288–9.

⁴⁶ Schnürer, p. 148.

⁴⁷ De Curzon, p. 68.

⁴⁸ Cf. below, p. 87.

⁴⁹ A. Trudon des Ormes, 'Liste des Maisons et de quelques Dignitaires de l'Ordre du Temple, en Syrie, en Chypre et en France, d'après les Pièces du Procès', *Revue de l'Orient Latin*, 5 (1897), 420. The regulations collected in the Templar Rule used *confreres* and *consuers* in a broad sense to cover every category of lay associate: De Curzon, pp. 283, 349.

in vita et in morte' the two terms were perhaps being used in a complementary way rather than as equivalents.⁵⁰

Life in Common: Double and Mixed Houses

In the military orders the *mulieres familiares*, that is the *consorores*, the *oblato* and *donate*, the *converse* and others, led a community life in a mixed regime. The presence in a male community of a female religious, whether known as a *soror*, *consoror* or otherwise, was in itself sufficient to define a commandery, hospital or monastery as mixed, just as the presence in a female community of a man, whether known as *frater*, *confrater* or by some other name, also created a mixed community. A double house was an establishment inhabited by both male and female religious which functioned as a single juridical unit and in which both men and women formed a recognizable and separate group or community.⁵¹ Double monasteries included houses of nuns which were adjacent to those of men and dependent directly on the abbot as well as groups of female lay *converse* who also depended directly on him.⁵² All double houses were mixed but not all mixed houses can be considered as double. A male house of a military order with only a single resident *soror* was not really a typical double house since it lacked the fundamental characteristic of such a house, that is, a female nucleus comprising a number of women who would often form a hierarchically structured religious community. It made no difference that the *mulieres*, independently of their number, had their own lodgings rigorously separated from the conventual buildings of the *fratres*. Such mixed houses were much more widespread in the three orders than double houses. Presumably only a minority of houses contained double or mixed communities.

Although there were exceptions,⁵³ it was probably only in a minority of houses that there was no type of mixed or double community, for the simple reason that for

⁵⁰ Miret y Sans, *Cases*, p. 222 (1226); Siena, Archivio di Stato, Conventi 161, fol. 308 (30 March 1269): 'conversus et oblatas eiusdem mansionis' [sc. Templi]. *Procès des Templiers*, ed. Jules Michelet, 2 vols (Paris, 1841–51), p. 635: 'qui omnes erant conversi seu donati hospitalis de Mormancio Lingonensis diocesis, cum dictum hospitale pervenisset ad Templarios'. Fourteenth-century Hospitaller texts distinguished *donati* from *conversi*, as in 1324: 'abbatissa, moniales, donati et conversi et capellani et quicumque familiares eiusdem [sc. monasterii]': Francesco Tommasi, 'Il monasterio femminile di San Bevinato dell'ordine di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano (secoli XIV–XVI)', in *Templari e Ospitalieri in Italia: la Chiesa di San Bevinato a Perugia*, ed. Mario Roncetti, Pietro Scarpellini and Francesco Tommasi (Perugia, 1987), p. 75.

⁵¹ Hilpisch, p. 1; cf. *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3 (Freiburg i. Br., 1959), p. 512.

⁵² As defined in Berlière, p. 3.

⁵³ Of 33 *baiulie* of the Hospital's Priory of Saint-Gilles in 1338, only four had one or two *donate* while *donati* were present almost everywhere: *Visites générales des Commanderies de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers dépendantes du Grand Prieuré de Saint-Gilles (1338)*, ed. B.

the *fratres* the acceptance of women in male houses and hospitals was a primary necessity since they needed the women's special abilities for certain tasks. The Teutonic Rule, based on the more severe Templar Rule, rejected the admission of sisters, that is *mulieres*, on moral grounds while recognizing their unrivalled capacities in practical activities such as nursing the sick in a hospital or breeding cattle. However, for those tasks these Orders could recruit *consorores* rather than full sisters or *mulieres admissae ad plenum ordinis consorcium*.⁵⁴ Other tasks for women included domestic work and washing and mending the brethren's clothes.⁵⁵

The permanent or temporary presence of men in female houses was related to the conduct of onerous tasks such as the often complicated administration of estates, a matter the *sorores* left to the *fratres* or *confratres*. According to the constitutions issued in 1330 by the Master of the Hospital, Hélión de Villeneuve, for the female convent at Alguaire in Catalonia, the community could maintain a male Hospitaller, known as the preceptor, to administer its goods.⁵⁶ At Prague in Bohemia,⁵⁷ Buckland in Somerset⁵⁸ and Sigena in Aragon⁵⁹ Hospitaller nuns used Hospitaller *fratres* to manage their estates. When in 1272 the *moniales* of Mühlen in the Diocese of Worms passed from the Cistercian to the Templar Order they secured the protection of the brethren of the local commandery who had to administer their estates and to maintain the *sorores* themselves.⁶⁰

The situation varied considerably.⁶¹ In 1255 the Hospitaller commandery at Nicosia on Cyprus contained *fratres ac mulieres familiares* but that did not

Beaucage (Aix-en-Provence, 1982), pp. 33, 100, 264, 426. Only three female donats were living in some 70 commanderies of the Priory of France in 1373: *L'Enquête pontificale de 1373 sur l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem*, vol. 1, ed. Anne-Marie Legras (Paris, 1987), pp. 258, 332, 334.

⁵⁴ *Die Statuten*, ed. Perlbach, p. 52; cf. de Curzon, p. 346.

⁵⁵ Lampe, p. 52.

⁵⁶ Joaquín Miret y Sans, *Noticia Històrica del Monestir d'Alguayre* (Barcelona, 1899), p. 17.

⁵⁷ *CH*, 1, p. 548 (no. 861).

⁵⁸ *A Cartulary of Buckland Priory in the County of Somerset*, ed. and trans. Frederic W. Weaver, Somerset Record Society, 25 (1909), p. 14 (no. 19) *et passim*; W. Page, *The Victoria History of the County of Somerset*, vol. 2 (London, 1911), p. 149.

⁵⁹ Agustín Ubieto Arteta, *El Real Monasterio de Sigena: 1188–1300* (Valencia, 1966), pp. 26–32, 149–54.

⁶⁰ Michael Schüpferling, *Der Tempelherren-Orden in Deutschland* (Bamberg, 1915), pp. 33–4.

⁶¹ Since the imprecision and scarcity of texts preclude any estimate of the number and type of female houses, this study is based impressionistically on isolated examples. Thus what survives of a text of 1269 does not permit the localization, even approximately, of female houses in the Neapolitan kingdom: 'Confratribus et consororibus sacre domus Hospitalis sancti Joannis Jerosolimitani habitum eius deferentes(!) provisio': *Gli Atti perduti della Cancelleria angioina transuntati da Carlo de Lellis*, ed. B. Mazzoleni (Rome, 1939), p. 65. In 1269 Carlo also exempted the Hospital's *confratres* and *sorores*, whose houses were

constitute a double house since the women were not fully professed *sorores*.⁶² The hospital at Boxerols in Catalonia, granted in 1227 by royal decree to the female Hospitaller house at Sigena, contained *fratres*, *sorores*, *conversi*, *conversae*, *donati* and *donatae*, and it was probably, therefore, a double rather than a mixed institution.⁶³ The existence in 1254 of an unspecified number of brethren and at least four sisters in the Teutonic hospital of the Holy Trinity and Saint Mary at Sterzing in the Tyrol presumably constituted a double convent.⁶⁴ There may have been a Hospitaller double monastery at Sneek in west Frisia late in the thirteenth century, even though only the occasional presence of a single *soror* is documented there, while the *fratres ac sorores* of the Teutonic commandery at Nes in Frisia in about 1400 very possibly belonged to a double house of the Teutonic Order.⁶⁵ The *fratres*, *sorores* and *donati* living at Curemont, from 1308 a daughter house of the female Hospitaller monastery of Fieux, may also have formed a double house.⁶⁶

The charitable community at Beaulieu in the Diocese of Cahors was apparently a double house from its foundation in the first half of the thirteenth century; *fratres* and *sorores* were serving in the hospital there in 1245–46,⁶⁷ and the presence of both men and women was documented in 1254.⁶⁸ The house seems at first to have been ruled alternately by the men and women; by 1250 the commander mentioned in 1245–46 had apparently been replaced by a female religious.⁶⁹ In 1259 its founders, Guibert of Thémînes and his wife Aygline, donated it to the Hospitallers of the Priory of Saint-Gilles, taking its habit themselves and spending the remaining years of their lives in Beaulieu ‘in obedience and observance’ of the Hospital’s Rule.⁷⁰ Under the new Hospitaller regime, however, the double institution seems progressively to have disappeared as it became an exclusively female house; only *sorores* were mentioned there in the second half of the thirteenth century,⁷¹ while the *Miracles* of Saint Flor, who was a nun there in the first half of the fourteenth century,

in the Abruzzo and were included in the Priory of Rome, from all taxes: *CH*, 3, p. 200 (no. 3344); cf. *ibid.*, 4, p. 293 (no. 3334 *bis*). On the Hospital’s female houses in the Abruzzo, Tommasi, Chapter 9, pp. 235–7.

⁶² *CH*, 2, p. 794 (no. 2762).

⁶³ Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, p. 168 (no. 111), and *ad indicem*.

⁶⁴ Lampe, p. 49.

⁶⁵ J. A. Mol, ‘Deux Commanderies de la Frise médiévale’, in *Les Ordres Militaires; la Vie rurale et le Peuplement en Europe occidentale (XIII–XVIII Siècles)* = *Flaran*, 4 (Auch, 1986), 245.

⁶⁶ *CH*, 4, p. 173 (no. 4801).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 627 (no. 2352).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 754 (no. 2669).

⁶⁹ E. Albe, ‘Les Religieuses hospitalières de l’Ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem au Diocèse de Cahors’, *Revue d’Histoire de l’Eglise de France*, 27 (1941), 183–4.

⁷⁰ *CH*, 3, p. 737 (no. 4413); Albe, 184.

⁷¹ *CH*, 3, pp. 716–17 (no. 4375), 737–40 (no. 4413); 4, pp. 13–14 (no. 4548).

contained very few references to *fratres*, though *donati* were more frequently mentioned.⁷²

A curious example of a double monastery was that of Santa Maria di Sovereto at Terlizzi in Puglia, though the surviving texts and the thirteenth-century Hospitaller burial slabs there⁷³ are too late to demonstrate to which order it belonged in 1203 when the five subscriptions to an act there showed it under the rule of an abbess while the subordinates of both sexes included a priest who was described as *prior* and was presumably the leader of a small male community.⁷⁴ When the Hospitallers acquired the *domus* they may have replaced the existing residents with members of the Hospital or they may have preserved the existing brethren and sisters together with the double structure of the house.⁷⁵ Practice evidently varied. Thus when Alexander IV assigned the Abbey of Saint Lazarus of Bethany near Jerusalem to the Hospital in 1256, the nuns, who had moved to Acre, never adopted the Hospital's Rule or habit and six years later they managed to free themselves completely from the Order.⁷⁶ Yet at Boxerols in Catalonia the institutional changeover apparently occurred without any trauma, with no known complaint or resistance from its male and female religious either when they took the habit and Rule of the Hospitaller nuns of Sigena or thereafter.⁷⁷

An unusual and unsubstantiated accusation, which was brought against the Templars at the time of their trials in 1309 but which led to no judicial proceedings and was not even included among the more than a hundred charges against the Order, was that they accepted *sorores* in their commanderies and then abused them

⁷² Clovis Brunel, 'Vida e Miracles de Sancta Flor', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 64 (1946), 34, 32, for the *donati*. The *fraire deldich luoc de l'Hospital* (ibid., 39) may have been a chaplain of the monastery; on this house's organization in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Albe, 193–5.

⁷³ Valente, 2, pp. 179–80.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2, pp. 82–117, with photographs of tomb slabs (plates IV–VI).

⁷⁵ In 1373 the *domus* di Sovereto was reduced to one *frater*, one chaplain and some *pueri* assisting at services, but the Commandery at Barletta, of which Sovereto was a *membrum*, included two professed sisters, *soror* Rossa and *soror* Cecca: text in D. Vendola, 'L'Ordine Sovrano di S. Giovanni nella Diocesi di Trani', *Archivio Storico di Malta*, 8 (1937), 165–6.

⁷⁶ Riley-Smith, pp. 401–3; Hans E. Mayer, *Bistümer, Kloster und Stifte im Königreich Jerusalem* (Stuttgart, 1977), pp. 382–5. The last members, two sisters and a chaplain, of the *collegium monialium* of Santa Maria de Mari ceded in 1224 to the Hospitallers of Barletta by the Bishop of Canne were to receive from the Hospital for life their *victum et vestitum videlicet competentem*; as with the sisters of St Lazarus at Bethany, there was no talk of their taking the Hospitaller habit or of integrating the minuscule community into that order: *Le Pergamene di Barletta: Archivio Capitolare (897–1285)*, ed. F. Nitti di Vito (Bari, 1914), p. 281. The Hospital seems to have had difficulties in persuading the former Templar sisters at Mühlen to accept its rule: Luttrell – Nicholson, Chapter 1, p. 26. The Hospitallers of the Priory of Bohemia had similar difficulties in 1257 with the sisters of the monastery of Sovez (Svitec): A. Potthast, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 2 (Berlin, 1875), no. 16,820.

⁷⁷ Cf. above, p. 83 n. 63.

to satisfy their own carnal desires, obliging the nuns to break their vow of chastity; they were alleged to have given the same treatment to women who professed at a later age, probably after being married.⁷⁸ This showed that the Temple did offer a religious life to women, and that both unmarried girls and older women became fully professed Templars vowed to poverty, chastity and obedience. There were various examples of married women who entered the Order and found a living space within the religious community.⁷⁹

As in the Hospitaller and Teutonic Orders, there was more likely to be a mixed or double Templar community in a predominantly male house, and more likely to be one in hospices and charitable institutions than in rural commanderies located away from transit areas of any importance. Hospices for pilgrims and travellers were a minority among Templar establishments, since hospitality and medical care were not among the Templars' institutional tasks. When in 1305 the Bishop of Parenzo assigned the male Benedictine monastery of San Michele of Leme in Istria to the Templars, they planned to transform the abbey, which was close to embarkation points on the Adriatic, into a house capable of accommodating people travelling to and from overseas parts.⁸⁰ At least some of the religious there joined the Temple; within two days *domina* Agnes, a *conversa*, offered herself with the usual ceremonies to God and the Order, and then received back the custody of the place from the hands of the Templar *prior* of Santa Maria *in capite broili* at Venice.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Le Dossier de l'Affaire des Templiers*, ed. Georges Lizerand (Paris, 1964), pp. 158, 160.

⁷⁹ Beatrice A. Lees, *Records of the Templars in England in the Twelfth Century* (London, 1935), p. 210 (c. 1189–93): 'Johanna uxor ... Ricardi militis de Chaldefelde qui se per Dei gratiam iugo regule Templi subdere proposuit licet confecta senio in tantum quod nullam (sic) deinceps de ea poterit sinistra oriri suspicio in presenciam officialium nostrorum castitatem servare promisit et ut ipse Regule Templi subdat ultimo promisit'. Other Templars were Berengaria de Llorac, *soror e donata* of the male house at Barbarà (mid-thirteenth century): Forey, Chapter 2, p. 46; J.-M. Sans i Travé, 'El Rourel una Preceptoría del Temple al Camp de Tarragona (1162?–1248)', *Boletín Arqueológico*, 4 (1976–77), 182 n. 177; Titborga daughter of Berenguer de Santa Columba received as *soror religioni* in 1197: texts in Miret y Sans, *Cases*, p. 222; Sans i Travé, 182, 186; Avenia, *filia malgi corvulini*, an *oblata* at Minervino Murge in Puglia before 1169: *Chartularium del Monastero di S. Benedetto di Conversano*, ed. D. Morea, 1 (Montecassino, 1892), p. 228; *soror Imberta de Cremena* at Albano in France between 1297 and 1304: Konrad Schottmüller, *Der Untergang des Templer-Ordens*, 2 (Berlin, 1887), p. 187; cf. Bulst-Thiele, p. 40.

⁸⁰ Mittarelli and Costadoni, 5, Append., p. 387 (no. 230); on the affairs of the monastery: F. Babudri, 'Le antiche Chiese di Parenzo', *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria*, 17 (1912), 156–7; V. Meneghin, *S. Michele in Isola di Venezia*, 1 (Venezia, 1962), pp. 22–3.

⁸¹ Mittarelli and Costadoni, 1, Append., p. 436; v, Append., pp. 387–9 (no. 230). Early in the fourteenth century *converse* were serving in the Templar hospital of Sant'Egidio della Misericordia at Piacenza: text in A. Tarlazzi, *Appendice ai Monumenti Ravennati dei secoli di mezzo del Conte Marco Fantuzzi*, 1 (Ravenna, 1872), p. 532 (no. 332). The author (p. 526 note a) erroneously read *M[asser]ie* for *Mi[sericordi]e*.

The Hospitaller Commandery of San Giovanni di Pré at Genoa showed how closely a mixed or a double foundation could be involved in charitable activities. In the twelfth century married women were already joining the male *xenodochium* and by 1226 there were professed sisters in the commandery.⁸² The extensive buildings at Genoa⁸³ included by 1373 two hospitals or *hospitalitates*, one for men and the other for women, the latter run by professed *moniales* or *sorores*. The sisters had a *precettrice* or abbess but both male and female communities obeyed a single superior, the male commander. In 1373 there were seven *fratres* and nine professed sisters, the latter being in charge of the hospital for female pilgrims which was endowed with 32 beds as against the 40 of the nearby male foundation; there was also a *mulier serviens*. These *sorores* were not economically autonomous, each receiving 12 florins and two *mine* of wheat annually from the male commander.⁸⁴ Since the commandery had been founded as a male house, the main political and administrative responsibilities remained in the men's hands, even when the female nucleus became more substantial. Elsewhere the situation was similar: neither the possibly sporadic presence of *conversse et dedicate et sorores* in the Hospitaller commandery of the Holy Cross at Milan,⁸⁵ nor that of the *sorores* in the Hospital's hospital of the Holy Sepulchre at Verona seems to have constituted a challenge to male control.⁸⁶

The origins of a religious house, as well as its numerical and hierarchical structure, determined the assignment of senior positions and the distribution of power. In the double house of Sigena, the more numerous female community always enjoyed undisputed supremacy, and the prioress exercised authority over the male commander or the *prior*, the most senior *frater* there.⁸⁷ At Buckland the roles were inverted; the English convent began as a female house with in about 1180 eight Hospitaller *sorores* who came from six predominantly male commanderies

⁸² Marchesini and Sperati, pp. 132–4, 312, 316, 318, 321, 323; Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, pp. 32–5.

⁸³ Visitation of 1710 in L. Tacchella, *I Cavalieri di Malta in Liguria* (Genoa, 1977), pp. 125–31.

⁸⁴ Archivio Vaticano, *Collectoriae*, 431 a, fols 4 and 6v.

⁸⁵ For 1259 three are known: *soror Fomia*, *soror Agatha* and *soror Benevenuta*: Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, pp. 37–40.

⁸⁶ In 1179 at least three *religiose* were serving in the hospital: 'In eadem Ecclesia Sancti Sepulcri ... Frater Lazarus vice, et nomine Hospitalis Hierosolimitani et Fratrum eius consensu, et voluntate Fratrum Hospitalis qui dicitur Pietatis hii sunt Aldegerius, Philippus, Thebaldus, Bibensaquam et Johannes Scutharius; de Sororibus Dom. Adelasa Dom. Brethella, et Dom. Truita, ... cum esset Magister et administrator praedicti Hospitalis de Pietate.' Text in G.-B. Biancolini, *Notizie Storiche delle Chiese di Verona*, vol. 2 (Verona, 1749), pp. 576–80; cf. L. Tacchella, *Il Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta nella Storia di Verona* (Genoa, 1969), pp. 18–21; *idem*, *Le 'Donate'*, pp. 35–6.

⁸⁷ Ubieto Arteta, *Monasterio de Sigena*, pp. 26–31, *et passim*.

in the English priory, but to the female priory⁸⁸ was soon added a separate male commandery with a minority of *fratres* whose chief even the prioress and her sisters had to obey.⁸⁹ A prominent individual could influence the arrangements within a monastery, disturbing its composition and upsetting internal balances. Authoritative and prominent personalities, often with the support of their relatives, could increase the prestige and the material wealth of an institution and determine its development. The royal house of Aragon exercised a strong control over the convent at Sigena because it had founded it, and the complete dependency of the first prioresses on its founder, Queen Sancha, was due to the fact that, soon after the death of her husband Alfonso II in 1196, she herself entered the monastery as a *soror*.⁹⁰

At Cervera in Catalonia another notable, although less distinguished, female personality was Marquesa de Guardia, daughter of the lord of Algerri and Pujalt. After her husband's death, she decided to become a Hospitaller sister. The Commandery of Cervera had previously contained individual *sorores*, *donate* and *consorores*⁹¹ without changing its original male character, and it only became a double house in 1245 when the prioral chapter of the Castellania de Amposta, as the Aragonese priory was called, decided that six *sorores de ordine hospitalis* were to join Marquesa, whom it appointed to rule the female and male communities.⁹² Marquesa very probably made a considerable donation to the commandery. So did Ermengarda d'Oluja when, together with her husband, she entered the Templar Commandery of Barberà also in Catalonia and began a career which showed how a simple *consoror* or *donata* could become a fully-professed *soror*. In 1196 she and her husband Gombau d'Oluja, lord of Vallfogona and other lands near Tarragona, offered themselves and certain estates to the Temple of Barberà. Although their entrance contract described them as *soror* and *frare*, they must have become resident donats. Gombau apparently died before Ermengarda, enabling her to take solemn vows as a full *soror*, and by 1198 she was the *preceptrix* of a Templar house, apparently the first woman to rule the male and female members at Rourrel, a member house of the Commandery of Barberà containing both *fratres* and *sorores*.⁹³

⁸⁸ William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6 part 2, 2nd edn (London, 1830), p. 837; the commanderies were Carbrooke (Norfolk), Hogshaw (Buckinghamshire), Gosford, Clanfield (Oxfordshire), Standon (Hertfordshire) and Shingay (Cambridgeshire). In each of the first four there resided a *soror* (Basilia, Cristina de Hoggeshawe, Petronilla, Agnese), and in the others two each (Johanna and Melisenda, Amabilia and Amica de Malketon); cf. *CH*, 1, pp. 679–80 (no. 1093).

⁸⁹ Page, p. 148; for two Commanders of Buckland, Joseph Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers à Rhodes jusqu'à la mort de Philibert de Naillac: 1310–1421* (Paris, 1913), pp. 145, 251 n. 3.

⁹⁰ Ubieto Arteta, *Monasterio de Sigena*, pp. 47–55.

⁹¹ Cf. Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, p. 18.

⁹² Miret y Sans, *Cases*, pp. 213–15; Tacchella, *Le 'Donate'*, pp. 18–20.

⁹³ Sans i Travé, 181–9.

The situation at Rourrel, unusual in the Temple,⁹⁴ was due primarily to Ermengarda's personal prestige, and ran contrary to the misogyny commonly attributed to the Templars in particular.⁹⁵ An allegedly 'institutionalized' homosexuality was one of the strongest accusations brought against the Templars during the famous trials after 1307, yet there were exceptions to their refusal to live alongside women. In both double and mixed foundations the relationship between men and women within the orders was often one of collaboration. Misunderstandings and conflicts were occasional and on a small scale. Despite the limitations imposed by the Templar and Teutonic statutes, minor difficulties did not alter the fundamental principle that women could participate in the life of the military orders.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 189.

⁹⁵ *Continuatio Weichardi de Polhaim a. 1280–1307*, ed. W. Wattenbach, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores*, vol. 9 (Hanover, 1851), p. 818: 'fratres Templarii ... non recipiebant aliquem ad professionem, nisi prius ... abiuravit omnes mulieres'. See also *Dossier*, ed. Lizerand, p. 32.

Chapter 4

The Sisters of the Order of Saint John at Mynchin Buckland*

Myra Struckmeyer

Because the Order of Saint John was one of the major military orders of the Middle Ages, female members may have seemed to many contemporaries to be out of place. Nevertheless, women were interested in joining the Order, and the Order was willing to accept them as members, either within male commanderies or in houses with exclusively female communities. In fact, according to a somewhat problematic entry in a report of 1338, almost 30 per cent of the Hospitallers in England and Wales were sisters of some sort. All of these sisters lived at Mynchin Buckland.¹ This house for female Hospitallers serves as a case study for the exploration of the functioning of a house of female religious within a predominantly male order, showing that, regardless of medieval perceptions of gender and the resulting practical problems of accommodating female religious, the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem found solutions that fully incorporated the women into its organization.

At first the priory at Buckland in Somerset was not Hospitaller at all. William de Erlegh, lord of the manor of Durston, had used property adjacent to his manor to establish a house for Augustinian canons at some point between 1170 and 1183. He gave a group of canons his lands and rights at Buckland, the churches of Petherton, Bekynton and Kilmersdon with all their privileges and lands, the chapel of Durston, a fishery, some meadows and some other lands for their own use. In return, they would give themselves to God, to Mary and to Saint Nicholas. William's uncle Thomas, Archdeacon of Taunton, who was to organize the canons, witnessed the transaction together with Stephen, Prior of Taunton, and many others. The donation

* Editors' note: we are particularly indebted to Myra Struckmeyer for providing an initial contribution based on 'The Sisters of the Hospital of St John at Buckland' (unpublished M. Phil. thesis: Cambridge, 1999). Her forthcoming doctoral thesis at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, will extend and deepen the preliminary conclusions published below.

Author's note: I am grateful to Jonathan Riley-Smith for bringing the sisters to my attention and for tirelessly guiding my research.

¹ Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

was a pious act made for the spiritual health of himself and his family and for the benefit of the souls of King Henry II, Queen Eleanor, their son Henry,² and their other sons and daughters.³ William's mention of the king and his family was not customary and pointed to a close relationship between them. Indeed, in 1166 an entry under 'Sumersete' in the Red Book of the Exchequer shows that he acted as the king's chamberlain.⁴ William was not from a great noble family but his service to the crown brought him close to the king.

A house of canons was in fact set up but its history was short. John Stillingflete, a fifteenth-century Hospitaller chronicler, explained that after several years Henry II caused the canons to forfeit the house on account of their crimes and bad public behaviour: they had killed the king's seneschal, a relative of William de Erlegh. The king subsequently had the canons removed and in about 1185 gave the property to the Order of Saint John for it to establish Hospitaller sisters there.⁵ The texts in the cartulary of Buckland support much of Stillingflete's story but do not mention the murder; the reason for the dissolution is left unclear.⁶ The cartulary contains the copies of 13 twelfth-century documents relating to the foundation of Buckland: two entries regarding the establishment of the canons, one explaining the situation in which the house had been given to the Hospitallers but without satisfactory arrangements having been made for the remaining canons, three entries testifying that the Prior of England had made suitable arrangements for the canons, and seven entries, which are letters from the king, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the pope and the Bishop of Bath, confirming the transfer to the Hospitallers for the establishment of Hospitaller sisters.⁷ Any letter ordering the canons to leave is, however, lacking.

² The 'Young Henry' was crowned during his father's lifetime, on 14 June 1170, and died 11 June 1183. The foundation must have taken place between these dates.

³ Taunton, Somerset Record Office, MS DD/SAS SX133 (henceforth SRO MS DD/SAS SX133), fol. 1; *A Cartulary of Buckland Priory in the County of Somerset*, ed. F. W. Weaver, Somerset Record Society, 25 (London, 1909), pp. 1–2, no. 1. As the translated edition is not always reliable, I cite the original but refer to Weaver's edition for the reader's convenience.

⁴ *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. Hubert Hall, Rolls Series 99 (London, 1896), p. 235. 'Domine suo Regi Anglorum, Willelmus de Erleiga fidele servitium. Sciatis, domine, quod de feodo meo debeo esse Camerarius vester et habeo j militem feffatum, scilicet, Thomam de Bercham, de antiquo feffamento, et nullum de novo feffamento. Valete': Weaver, p. xix.

⁵ John Stillingflete, *Liber de nominibus fundatorum Hosp. S. Johannis Jerusalem in Anglia*: London, College of Arms, MS L 17, fol. 153v. See also the published version of John Stillingflete's chronicle in William Dugdale et al., *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. 6 part 2 (London, 1830), p. 837: 'Quos quidem canonicos, postea per plures annos, per eorum culpam et forisfacturam; eo videlicet, quod quandam senescallum suum, consanguineum Willelmi de Erlegh interfecerunt, dominus Henricus secundus, pro tunc existens, fecit amoveri.'

⁶ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133. This cartulary seems to have belonged to the brothers of Buckland Commandery, not the sisters.

⁷ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 5v; Weaver, pp. 14–15, no. 19.

The letter from Bishop Reginald of Bath, complaining that no satisfactory arrangements had been made for the canons, shows that the case was surrounded by ambiguity, cover-up and lies. The bishop wrote of 'the truth now revealed'; he believed that the 'venerable lord' William de Erlegh had agreed that the Hospitallers would get the property formerly belonging to the canons for the maintenance of their sisters. However, the Hospitallers were forced to delay the installation of the sisters as they were waiting for royal action to force the canons to move out. To speed up the process, William appealed to Ranulf de Glanville, the king's Chief Justiciar. Then, before the move took place, William died without having fully confirmed his donation to the Hospitallers. The Bishop of Bath, however, endorsed the transfer which had been approved by 'the king, the Lord of Canterbury, himself, and even William de Erlegh'.⁸

Later Bishop Reginald, Garnier of Nablus, the Prior of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem in England, and Walter, the former prior of the canons, each attested to the fact that Garnier had made suitable alternative arrangements for the canons. Garnier gave three canons and a lay brother, or *conversus*, the Hospitaller habit. He also arranged that two other canons were received among the canons of Taunton, one canon into the monastery of Berlich,⁹ and one into the 'monastery' of Saint Bartholomew of Smithfield at London.¹⁰ Prior Stephen of the church in Taunton wrote to the bishop of the regular profession of three of the canons into his order. The Bishop of Bath ended his confirmation with the prayer that 'that which they professed they may actually perform.'¹¹

While Reginald's first letter showed William as the initiator of the new arrangements, his second letter notified its readers that King Henry II had caused the canons to be removed in order to establish sisters at Buckland.¹² It is not, therefore, clear whether the king became the grantor after William asked for his intervention or whether William sought such intervention because the king had some vested interest. Henry's interest was spiritual as well as political because he was doing more than just interfering in ecclesiastical affairs or protecting his own men. The health of Henry's soul and that of his relatives was at stake, for the original foundation had been made in part for that purpose. In later letters, however, it was clearly the king who received credit for the initiative and it seems that his royal intervention overshadowed that of William, especially after the latter's death.

⁸ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 1–1v; Weaver, pp. 3–4, no. 3. Weaver does not indicate that William had died.

⁹ 'Berlitz', according to Stillingflete; Dugdale, vol. 6.2, p. 837; London, College of Arms, MS L 17, fol. 153v. This could be the same as Barlinch Priory in Somerset which was founded during Reginald's episcopate. See David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London, 1971) p. 146.

¹⁰ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 1v; Weaver, p. 4, no. 4.

¹¹ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 2; Weaver, p. 5, no. 6.

¹² SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 1v; Weaver, p. 4, no. 4.

After the canons had moved out, Henry II confirmed the donation of Buckland, including the chapel of Saint Mary and Saint Nicholas, to the Hospital of Jerusalem 'and the brothers of the same house' so that they could bring together and support (*ad collocandas et sustenandas*) the sisters of their order. He reiterated that the Prior of England had agreed with him personally that he would not retain sisters in any other Hospitaller house in England, except in the said house at Buckland'.¹³ Henry II's charter is in style and content that of a donor, and Bishop Reginald of Bath confirmed it as such in 1186.¹⁴

In the same year the Prior of the Hospital in England brought together eight sisters from six different commanderies, namely Melisene and Johanna from Standon (Hertfordshire), Basilia from Carbrooke (Norfolk), Amabila and Amicia de Malketon from Shingay (Cambridgeshire), Christina de Hogshaw from Hogshaw (Buckinghamshire), Petronella from Gosford (Oxfordshire) and Agnes from Clanfield (Oxfordshire); and a certain Fina, who became the first prioress in England.¹⁵ Furthermore a community of brothers was established at Buckland, where they were to take care of the sisters. Henry II had made the donation to the Hospital, not to the women, and the precise relationship between the sisters and the brothers remained undefined until the thirteenth century.

Henry II's explicit request that all female Hospitallers be placed under one roof was novel. King Alfonso II of Aragon had attempted to set up a house for Hospitaller sisters in 1177 but he had not required that all sisters within Aragon should live at Grisén; his stipulation was limited to the condition that the sisters could not be moved from the house. The Bohemian prior Bernard had built a convent for Hospitaller sisters at Manetin in about 1180 at the request of a donor, and a few years later these sisters were moved to another house, probably at Prague, but nothing indicates that either house was meant to collect all Hospitaller sisters in the priory.¹⁶ In all three cases the Order was not taking the initiative to create houses for its sisters but was responding to requests from lay patrons.

The sisters who moved to Buckland had previously lived in commanderies among men. Henry II's wish to end the existence of 'mixed' Hospitaller houses, that is houses with a minority of religious women, reflected the Church's general unease

¹³ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 2–2v: 'Ita quod Prior hospitalis conventionavit michi quod in nulla alia domo sua in Anglia retinebit sorores ordinis sui nisi in predicto domo de Bochland Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod domus hospitalis Jerusalem et fratres in ea deo servientes omnia predicta habeant et teneant in libera et perpetua elemosina ad collocandas et sustenandas memoratas sorores.' Weaver, pp. 5–6, no. 7. See *CH*, no. 1093 for a confirmation of the same by King John in 1199.

¹⁴ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 3–3v; Weaver, pp. 7–8, no. 11.

¹⁵ Dugdale, vol. 6.2, p. 837; London, College of Arms, MS L 17, fol. 153v. The house initially had eight sisters from six houses, plus Prioress Fina; sisters from a further two houses joined later: Knowles and Hadcock, p. 284.

¹⁶ *CH*, nos 523, 861.

about religious women in predominantly male orders. Contemporary reformers had championed the monastic ideal of celibacy as desirable even for secular priests.¹⁷ To those men who were committed to a life without sexual activity, the presence of women seemed a great danger. Therefore, when men and women alike enthusiastically took up new forms of religious life at the beginning of the twelfth century and new mixed communities were established, prelates such as Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux expressed concern and encouraged enclosure for religious women in order to protect the souls of both men and women. The apprehension regarding female participation in religious life intensified in the third quarter of the twelfth century, when women's religious 'enthusiasm was curtailed' by regulations and an era of creativity and experiment came to an end.¹⁸

The religious orders responded to the new anxiety regarding the presence of religious women in different ways. Saint Norbert, founder of the Premonstratensian Order, attracted many women when he first started preaching in 1118, and he established religious houses for men and women. However, by 1134 the sisters were being forced to leave these mixed communities and by the end of the century the Premonstratensian canons had decided that no more women were to be admitted. Women were again admitted in the thirteenth century, but antagonism to them remained.¹⁹ While Saint Norbert made an effort to accommodate women in mixed communities, the Templars restricted the admission of women. Already in 1129, their Rule warned the brothers that 'the company of women is a dangerous thing, for by it the old devil has led many from the straight path to Paradise. Henceforth, let not ladies be admitted as sisters into the house of the Temple'.²⁰ In practice, however, the Templars did allow various forms of female association to their Order but the acceptance of women was never widespread.²¹

Other religious orders responded to the 'proximity anxiety' by permitting only segregated houses.²² In England, the Gilbertine Order first had mixed houses, but in 1166 Pope Alexander III took seriously the lay brothers' accusation that the canons, lay brothers and sisters lived together inappropriately. He opened an investigation into their supposed sexual licentiousness and urged the segregation of the sexes. However, Henry II and others supported the Gilbertine Order against the pope, arguing that lay patrons would withdraw their patronage if the nuns were removed.

¹⁷ Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (New York, 1996), p. 6.

¹⁸ Sharon K. Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill, 1988), pp. 117–24; Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society. Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (Ithaca, 1997), pp. 133–69.

¹⁹ Venarde, pp. 70, 163–4; Penny Shine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 86–8.

²⁰ *La Règle du Temple*, ed. Henri de Curzon (Paris, 1886), p. 69; Helen Nicholson, 'Templar Attitudes Towards Women', *Medieval History*, 1.3 (1991), 74.

²¹ Forey, Chapter 2, pp. 44–6; Tommasi, Chapter 3.

²² Venarde, p. 164.

Most of the controversy was resolved in 1169: the Gilbertine Order was acquitted of the accusations, but the segregation was enforced.²³ The case was fully settled in 1178.²⁴ Two years later Henry urged the segregation of the Hospitallers in England. His decision may be viewed in light of his penance for his part in the murder of Thomas Becket in 1170, and his desire to regain the favour of the Church. As part of this penance, Henry had promised to support papal reform policies and his decision to create a separate house for female Hospitallers could have been a way of paying lip service to this reform while at the same time asserting royal power.²⁵ Although not without spiritual concern, Henry's inclination seems to have been practical and opportunistic rather than being inspired by personal prejudice against mixed-sex religious houses.

The Order of Saint John welcomed the transfer of the property at Buckland and accepted the implications regarding the sisters' segregation. Perhaps because of their original hospitaller mission, the Hospitallers never formally objected to having women in their ranks.²⁶ In general, many hospitals of the late twelfth century had brothers as well as sisters to care for the sick, the poor or any others in need.²⁷ The sisters in most hospitals were lay sisters, as perhaps were those in the hospital of Beaulieu in France before it was donated to the Order of Saint John in 1259 and, presumably, became a house for sisters only.²⁸ Indeed, the hospital of the Order of Saint John had in Jerusalem been served by brothers and sisters, and the Hospitaller houses at their hospitals of Toulouse and Trinquetaille had women *sorores* in the twelfth century.²⁹

²³ Brian Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order, c. 1130–c. 1300* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 48–9.

²⁴ Venarde, p. 167; *The Book of Saint Gilbert*, ed. R. Foreville and G. Keir (Oxford, 1987), pp. lx–lxii.

²⁵ Elizabeth M. Hallam, 'Henry II as a Founder of Monasteries,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 28 (1977), 128–9, 132; Elkins, p. 120; Venarde, p. 155.

²⁶ The Order of Saint John kept its hospitaller function and identity even after assuming military functions in the 1130s: Alan Forey, 'The Militarisation of the Hospital of St. John', *Studia Monastica*, 26 (1984), 88–9; Anthony Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers' Medical Tradition, 1291–1530', *MO*, 1, p. 75; James Brodman, 'Rule and Identity: the Case of the Military Orders', *Catholic Historical Review*, 88 (2001), 386–7.

²⁷ For example, the regular sisters of Saint Leonard's hospital in York or the 13 brothers and sisters who took vows and wore a religious habit at Saint John's hospital in Reading: Knowles and Hadcock, pp. 386, 407; the almonry in Angers refounded by Henry II c. 1181 for ten canons, ten brothers, and ten sisters: Hallam, 127.

²⁸ *CH*, no. 2923.

²⁹ Benjamin Z. Kedar, 'A Twelfth-Century Description of the Jerusalem Hospital. A Provisional Edition of Clm. 4620, fol. 132v–139v', *MO*, 2, pp. 3–26, here 21, 25; John H. Mundy, 'Charity and Social Work in Toulouse, 1100–1250', *Traditio*, 22 (1966), 260, 264; *Cartulaire de Trinquetaille*, ed. P.-A. Almargier (Gap, 1972), pp. 64, 96, 209, 211. Petrus Annona, *hospitalarius*, and Mabilia, *hospitaleria*, were among the witnesses of a charter 'in domo hospitalis' in 1197: *ibid.*, p. 316.

The Order considered the sisters' proximity to the brothers as a risk, but that concern was not so great as to cause any challenge to the existence of female Hospitallers. Actual scandals were rare in England, although an exception at the end of the fourteenth century concerned a young commander at Buckland, who reportedly broke his vow of chastity on account of his *carnis lascivia*. Pierre de Culant, Marshal and Lieutenant of the Master at Rhodes, thought it prudent to place an elderly commander in charge of Buckland commandery, because a man of advanced age would be less drawn to vice and that would save the sisters and the Order from future scandals. In 1391, Culant wrote to the Prior of England that an elderly commander should preside over Buckland since the 'ripeness of age and gravity of morals' should be encouraged especially 'when danger threatens'.³⁰

The fear of women was mostly directed against secular women. The Hospitallers were concerned about their own chastity and their Rule established a punishment for fornication. It also forbade brothers to allow a woman to wash their feet or heads, or to let her make their beds. In the 1180s the *Hospitaller Riwle*, an Anglo-Norman version of the Rule, also warned against women:

Si vus venez [tut] entresheit
Par aventure u femmes eit,
Gardez [bien] vos Chasteté
Ke vus de Deu eez le gré.

If you happen to come
there where women are,
guard with care your chastity,
which you have by God's grace.

Ne femme apreze vos grabaz,
Tost i mettereit Sathan un laz.³¹

Don't let a woman near you
Satan will soon have you trapped.

The presence of female Hospitallers had practical implications for the organization of the Order which its brothers were willing to accept. They made special arrangements because women could never function in complete independence of men since at the very least they needed men to celebrate mass and to administer the other sacraments.³² At Buckland the Hospitallers established a separate house for brothers which was adjacent to the women's house (fig. 4.1) for their support. Buckland, therefore, consisted of two houses: a priory for sisters, also called Mynchin Buckland, and a commandery for brothers. Both answered to the Prior of the Order in England who, with the approval of the Master, appointed a commander to govern the brothers. The male commandery functioned in general like other

³⁰ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 6v–7v: 'Quia in cunctis ecclesiarum regiminibus etatis maturitas morumque gravitas perstrutetur et maxime ubi potest maius imminere periculum ibi est caucius indagandi et ideo statui religiosarum nostre domus sororum talis debet preponi antistes quod etatis defectu obsistente carnali non trahatur vicio'; *Cartulary*, ed. Weaver, pp. 17–20, no. 22, provides the Latin text.

³¹ *The Hospitallers' Riwle (Miracula et Regula Hospitalis Sancti Johannis Jerosolimitani)*, ed. Kenneth V. Sinclair (London, 1984), p. 28.

³² Gold, pp. 76–7.

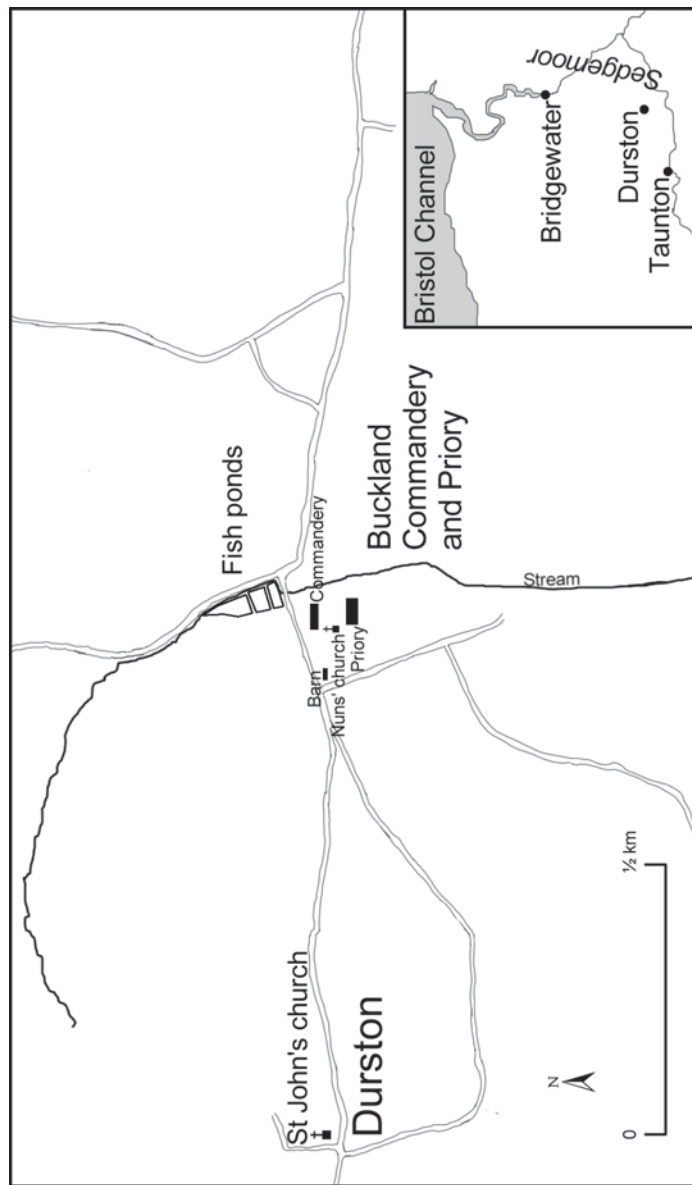


Fig. 4.1

Sketch plan of Buckland Priory and Commandery and their locations, with details of buildings. Note the fishponds to the north of the site. The nuns' church lay between the women's priory and the men's commandery; the men's commandery contained a chapel for the brothers' use. These buildings were demolished in about 1800. One wall of one barn of the modern Buckland farm dates from the late-medieval period. Buckland Commandery held the advowson of Durston church, but most of the modern church building there dates from the nineteenth century

commanderies in England, but with some differences: for instance, it provided a steward and a priest for the sisters.³³

Buckland's arrangement was one of various ways in which the Order of Saint John accommodated women's houses. At Sigena in Aragon a prioress governed both brothers and sisters. She was answerable to the Castellan of Amposta, who had the rank and function of a prior and who had influence over Sigena in matters such as the choice of prioress.³⁴ In France the Prior of Saint-Gilles had, at least in theory, an authority over the house of sisters at Beaulieu, which was similar to that of the Castellan over Sigena. Another house in the priory at Fieux was also dependent on the Prior of Saint-Gilles.³⁵ The houses in Frisia were exceptional because a commander, not a prioress, directed them. Visitation records of 1495 show that at Warffum, the Commander Brother Rodolf de Laege had with him two Hospitaller chaplains and about 60 Hospitaller nuns.³⁶ In the same year, Rodulf Horngin was Commander of Wijtwerd with one chaplain and 15 sisters.³⁷

Furthermore, notwithstanding contemporary reservations, women were often present in male houses. Because laywomen could associate themselves with male or female houses, their eventual entrance, if this occurred, could result in the presence of sisters in male houses. There were two ways in which it was possible for secular women, like secular men, to associate themselves with the Order without taking full vows. First, they could become a *consoror* which allowed them burial with the Order and a yearly commemorative celebration of the divine office even during interdict; in return they paid an annual fee.³⁸ Confraternity was a common way for laypersons to associate themselves with the Order, but it did not usually lead to full membership before death. Second, secular men and women could become donats, pledging or giving their possessions to the Order, sometimes with the intent of making a full profession later. Until then, donats might keep some of the income of their property, but promised not to join another religious order. The arrangement was popular with married couples who could not take full religious vows because they wanted to remain married. At Buckland Roger and Adeliz, for example, donated land to the Hospital so that if they 'would like to enter the holy house' they

³³ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 5v: 'predicta prioressa et conventus habunt fratrem senescallum ad mensam preceptoris,' and 'Item unum sacerdotem ... qui est in mensa cum fratribus et lectum in thalamo inter sacerdotes et clericos per reliquum tempus faciendi secundum dispositionem priorisse'; Weaver, pp. 14–15, no. 19.

³⁴ CH, no. 835.

³⁵ CH, no. 4413. Cf. L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8.

³⁶ 'Preceptor frater Rodulphus de Laege ... habet secum duos cappellanos ordinis sancti Johannis et circa sexaginta moniales ordinis sancti Johannis', in *Sources Concerning the Hospitallers of St John in the Netherlands, 14th–18th Centuries*, ed. Joanna M. van Winter (Leiden, 1998), p. 477.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 7; CH, no. 122.

would be accepted.³⁹ In southern France in 1191 Rostan and Guilhelma sold their land and the rights of two fiefs to Bertrand de Millau, Prior of Saint-Gilles. In return he gave them 3000 *sous* and promised to accept them as brother and sister of Saint-Gilles at their convenience. If Guilhelma indeed put on the Hospitaller habit, she would have been one of a small number of women at Saint-Gilles.⁴⁰

The Order continued therefore to have commanderies with a majority of brothers and a minority of sisters throughout the Middle Ages. In southern France women lived not only in Saint-Gilles but also in Hospitaller houses at Trinquetaille and Toulouse.⁴¹ In Frisia four sisters of the male commandery in Sneek died in a fire in 1294, and a certain Eelke Mauringhe, *soror ordinis sancti Johannis*, lived in the commandery in 1432.⁴² In England, even after King Henry II's stipulation, sisters were mentioned in a document that gave the Hospitallers the privilege of keeping dogs to guard their commandery at Hampton in 1227.⁴³

At least twice in the thirteenth century the Hospitallers went beyond merely accepting women. In the first case, the Hospitallers tried to prevent a house of its own sisters from becoming independent. In 1233 they opposed Pope Gregory IX when he allowed the female house at Aconbury to become independent of the Order at the request of Margaret de Lacy, founder of the house. The pope had suggested that only the elderly women should remain in the hospital at Aconbury to take care of the poor and the sick, and that the younger sisters be transferred to other nunneries. The Order, however, refused to let the women go. Four years of litigation followed. Margaret won the suit in 1237 when the pope allowed the sisters to become independent Augustinian canonesses.⁴⁴ In the second case, the Hospitallers actively attempted to acquire a nunnery. The Hospitallers had convinced the pope that he should give them the convent in Acre of the sisters of Saint Lazarus of Bethany by exaggerating the poor state of the house and the danger of Muslim attacks. They also admitted frankly that they needed the convent's income. Jacques Pantaléon, Patriarch of Jerusalem, opposed the donation and revoked it in 1261, a

³⁹ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 66v: 'In hac autem covencione est quod ego Rogerus vel uxor mea voluimus nos ad sanctam domum convertere pro hac terra accipiamur'; Weaver, p. 161, no. 291.

⁴⁰ *Cartulaire du Prieuré de Saint-Gilles de l'Hôpital de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, (1129–1210)*, ed. Daniel Le Blévec and Alain Venturini (Turnhout, 1997), pp. 68–9, no. 88. Rostan and Guilhelma were to be received *in fratrem domus Hospitalis* and *in sororem domus Hospitalis*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68–9, 222–3, 318; *Cartulaire de Trinquetaille*, pp. 64, 96, 209, 211; Mundy, 260, 264.

⁴² Johannes A. Mol, *De Friese Huizen van de Duitse Orde: Nes, Steenkerk en Schoten en Hun Plaats in het Middeleeuwse Kloosterlandschap* (Leeuwarden, 1992), p. 73.

⁴³ *Calendar of the Charter Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office: 1226–1257*, vol. 1 (London, 1903), p. 30.

⁴⁴ *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters, I: 1198–1304*, ed. W. H. Bliss (London, 1893), p. 163; *CH*, 2, no. 2167. On this case see Nicholson, Chapter 6.

month after he had been installed as Pope Urban IV.⁴⁵ The cases of Aconbury and Acre show that the Hospitallers valued their houses of sisters and in one case thought them important enough to engage in long-term litigation.

The possibility of economic advantage encouraged the acceptance of women. In the case of Saint Lazarus of Bethany at Acre, the convent's income had clearly been its attraction. Likewise, the Hospitallers were interested in possible financial gain from female houses in the West. These houses, like the male houses, were meant to support the Order's responsibilities in the East. Some patrons shared a concern for the cause in the East and gave such concern as the reason for their support. A document in the cartulary of Buckland showed that one patron made a donation to the brothers 'for the instruction of the poor of the land of Jerusalem.'⁴⁶ Other donors showed concern for the military situation in the Latin East and gave donations 'to the brothers of the Hospital of Jerusalem at Buckland serving God in support of the Holy Land',⁴⁷ or 'for the defence of holy Christianity against the enemies of God in the Land of Jerusalem'. The latter patron also expressed the hope that 'God may cause us to be sharers of all good things and alms, which will be, have been, or were in Jerusalem from the days of the apostles until the end of times. Amen'.⁴⁸ But most concerns were ideological rather than practical concerns about the situation in the East, referring to the symbol of Jerusalem and the poor of Christ rather than to the political situation or the material needs of the poor, and these references were limited to the late twelfth and early thirteenth century.⁴⁹ The foundations in the West supported the Order's military and hospitaller activities in the East by paying responsions, an internal tax by which the headquarters in the East received a financial contribution from the houses in the West. According to the Rule, the amount of the contribution was a third of the income of each dependent house, but in practice the size of the resposion from women's houses fluctuated.⁵⁰ Just like the brothers, the sisters at Buckland and elsewhere could support the original activities of the Order in the East by creating revenue and sending it to the headquarters.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), pp. 401–3; *CH*, no. 2781; 3, no. 2993.

⁴⁶ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 35v: 'ad instructacionem pauperum terre Jerusalem'; Weaver, p. 86, no. 142.

⁴⁷ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 11: 'fratribus hospitalis Jerusalem apud Bucland deo serventibus in subsidium terre sancte'; Weaver, p. 29, no. 37.

⁴⁸ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 64: 'deo et pauperibus sancti Hospital' Jerusalem ad defensionem sancte Christianitatis contra inimicos dei in terra Jerusalem' ... 'Ut deus nos faciat participes omnium bonorum et elemosinarum que fient vel facta sunt aut erunt in Jerusalem a diebus apostolorum usque in finem seculi Amen'; Weaver, p. 154, no. 275 (slightly different translation).

⁴⁹ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 35; Weaver, p. 85, no. 140. Other examples: p. 5 no. 7; p. 33, no. 43, p. 38, no. 52; p. 69, no. 110; p. 71, nos 112, 113; p. 72, no. 114; and so on.

⁵⁰ Riley-Smith, pp. 342, 344; *CH*, no. 30; Alan Forey, *The Military Orders: From The Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Basingstoke, 1992), pp. 152–3.

Their original activity in Jerusalem may have made the presence of women acceptable and their economic assets made them desirable, but the women's greatest contribution was that of prayer.⁵¹ Most sisters in female houses followed a 'life' similar to that of Augustinian canonesses and led a 'life' devoted to the divine service. The Rule of Sigena prescribed in detail a 'life' devoted to religious observance. Silence was kept, the day was planned according to the liturgical hours, and all the hours were sung. The *sacrista* prepared the church, the *cantrix* led the singing, and the prioress directed the services. In addition, certain times of the day were devoted to private reading.⁵² The sisters in Frisia also sang and read the liturgical hours.⁵³ At Buckland the sisters had their own church and there was a brother-priest to say mass and administer the sacraments. Furthermore, in the fifteenth century the sisters owned a psalter in Latin which included a calendar, canticles (*Confitebor, Ego dixi, Exultavit, Cantemus domino, Domine audi, Audite celi, Te Deum, Benedicite omnia, Benedictus, Magnificat, Nunc dimittis*) and fragments of the office for the dead (fig. 4.2).⁵⁴ The sisters' prayer deepened the contemplative dimension of the Order and they were valued for this religious contribution, for a life of contemplation had been considered of greater value than an active life ever since Jesus praised Mary over Martha (Luke 10:41–42). The military orders felt some spiritual inferiority because of their involvement in the worldly activity of warfare, and the Hospitallers sought to combat their image of offering an undemanding spiritual life by emphasizing their religious obligations in, for example, their ceremony for profession and other religious activities.⁵⁵

Moreover, the Order of Saint John had female members because women wanted to join. In theory, men and women could only make a religious profession voluntarily.⁵⁶ The Hospitaller legislation described this voluntary profession in the ceremony for receiving new brothers. During the ceremony of profession the prior or another person in charge would ask the candidate whether he was willing to endure hardship for the good of the Order, was married, in debt, a serf, or promised to another order. If not, the candidate could profess. If the candidate lied and this was discovered, he could lose his habit. Likewise, if a candidate was not 'of a right

⁵¹ Very few fully professed sisters seem to have worked as staff in hospitals, especially after the twelfth century. The medieval hospital was a charitable institution serving the needy and not necessarily a medical facility.

⁵² *CH*, no. 859.

⁵³ *Sources*, ed. Van Winter, pp. 453, 479.

⁵⁴ London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 718; Pamela J. Willetts, *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Society of Antiquaries of London* (London, 2000), p. 309.

⁵⁵ Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*, pp. 87–8; Riley-Smith, pp. 231–3.

⁵⁶ On 'the growing emphasis in the twelfth century on voluntary nature of monasticism', see Constable, p. 106. The freedom to choose was and is delineated by the expectations of an individual's social environment. For a discussion of the importance of family and tradition for medieval religious women, see P. Johnson, *Equal in the Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (London, 1991), pp. 16–18.

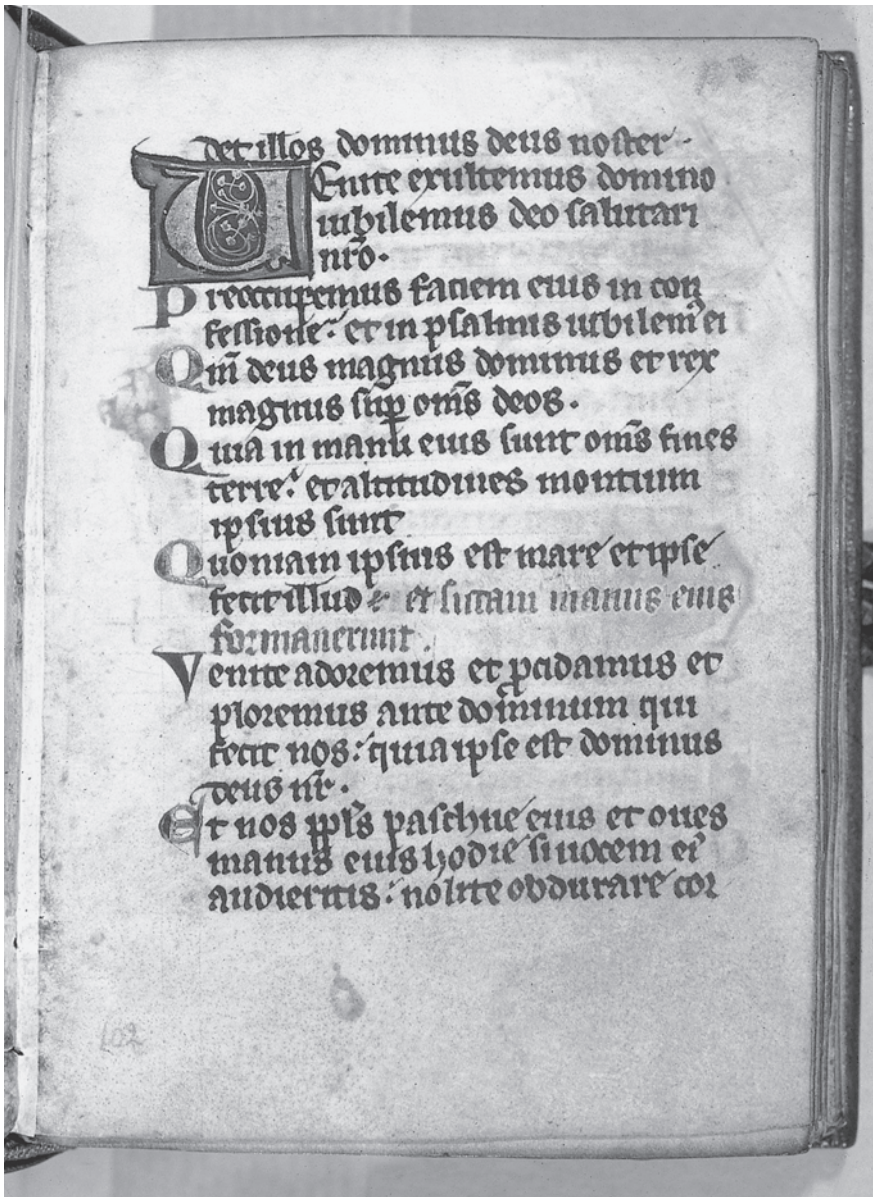


Fig. 4.2 A folio from the Buckland Psalter, owned by the Hospitaller sisters of Buckland. It was produced in Flanders in the thirteenth century, and written in Latin: here showing Psalm 95

mind', or joined the Order out of intimidation or fear rather than from his own desire, the ecclesiastical courts could release the professed man from his vow.⁵⁷ The Rule did not explicitly mention sisters as the statutes occasionally did, but it seemed that the female candidates followed the same procedure for profession. For example, the wife of William FitzMuriel argued in a dispute concerning her dowry that she was not truly a professed sister at Buckland because she had been placed there against her will.⁵⁸

Since freedom of choice to enter religion was so important, being of the right age was pivotal to a valid profession. Candidates had to be old enough to know what they were promising.⁵⁹ This meant that a girl could become a novice if she was at least eight years old, and she could take the habit when she reached the age of 12. The importance of lawful age and voluntary profession surfaced in a case in the episcopal court of Bath and Wells. It concerned Clarice Still, who had gone to Buckland as a novice in 1383. A certain David Carmayngton claimed that Clarice's guardian, Walter Reynolds, had taken her to Buckland while she was only seven years old. Carmayngton charged Reynolds with placing Clarice at Buckland while under age because he wanted Clarice's inheritance to fall into the hands of his wife. Carmayngton further alleged that Reynolds had compelled Clarice to take vows with the aid of two Hospitaller sisters who told the child that if she left through the priory's door 'the devil would take her away'. The Bishop of Bath and Wells decided that Clarice had agreed to go to Buckland in order to see whether life in the convent would please her. He concluded that she was at least eight years old at that time and that she had assumed the religious habit according to the manners and customs of the house when she was at least 12 years old. Finally, the bishop stated that she was now at least 14 years old and content with the religious life. Clarice stayed at Buckland.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *CH*, no. 2213, section 121.

⁵⁸ Alan Forey, 'Recruitment to the Military Orders', *Viator*, 17 (1986), 152.

⁵⁹ Johnson, p. 28; F. D. Logan, *Runaway Religious in Medieval England, c. 1240–1540* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 10–16. The Hospitaller statute of *CH*, no. 3039, probably dating from after 1206 and before 1262, which states that priors could receive sisters into the house provided that they were not young nor of 'suspicious age', probably referred to the reception of women into male houses. See above, Forey, Chapter 2, p. 64. It is not always clear whether children living at Buckland were intended to join the Order when they came of age or whether they were simply being looked after by the Order out of charity. In 1228 King Henry III (1216–72) made provision 'de liberationibus datis pauperibus' for three girls at Buckland: 'ad sustentandum in perpetuum tres puellas in eodem prioratu'. A similar provision was made for at least one boy at the male commandery of Buckland: *Close Rolls. Henry III: AD 1227–1231*, p. 65; SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 27; Weaver, p. 68, no. 107 (1246).

⁶⁰ *Yearbooks of Richard II*, ed. Theodore F. T. Plucknett, 12 (London, 1929), pp. 71–7, 150–53; Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 36–8.

The lack of personal information makes it difficult to know why women chose a religious life at Buckland. Some sisters joined communities with which they had local ties. For example, Christina de Hogshaw had joined the house at Hogshaw before being moved to Buckland in about 1185, while Katherine de Erlegh, prioress in 1337, was a descendant of the founder of Buckland whose manor was nearby. Other sisters, however, came from further afield. For example, Agnes, the daughter of William, earl of Arundel, lived at Buckland in the 1230s. Isabel, daughter of Thomas de Berkeley, was prioress from at least 1330 to 1337.⁶¹ Their family's expectations probably influenced their choice, especially when they entered at a young age.⁶² Other women might, like Clarice, have been coerced by their families, but that was not usual. In general, the Hospitallers accepted women who wanted to associate themselves with the Order.

The Hospitallers had to make special arrangements for the accommodation of their sisters, in particular when these sisters lived in single-sex houses such as Mynchin Buckland. In or before 1187 the Order established a house of brothers next to that of the sisters so that the men might assist the women spiritually and economically. As a result the brothers and sisters had to cooperate. The surviving records from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries indicate, however, that their relationship was not always amicable. The sisters' dependency on the men and the brothers' burden of taking care of the women led to tensions regarding rents, rights-of-way, access to fuel and other economic issues. Furthermore, the relative poverty of the sisters added to these aggravations in the fourteenth century. At times the Prior of England had to intervene to restore peace, but despite the grievances and complaints the sisters' presence remained unchallenged until the Dissolution of 1539.

Mynchin Buckland and the commandery at Buckland were truly separate in the sense that each had its own economic basis: the brothers received the manor of Halse, which Robert of Arundel had donated to the Hospitallers in 1152, while at the time of their foundation the sisters received all those possessions formerly owned by the Augustinian canons.⁶³ The sisters' house was located a short walk from William de Erlegh's manor of Durston (fig. 4.1), which was several miles east of Taunton in Somerset. Its main buildings stood on a high point overlooking the surrounding fields. It was close to a stream, which was channelled to provide water for the fisheries and sewage.⁶⁴ Just north of the house was a well for fresh water. The site contained residential buildings for the sisters with a church dedicated to Saint Mary

⁶¹ *Close Rolls. Henry III: AD 1231–1234*, p. 165; Thomas Hugo, *History of Mynchin Buckland Priory and Preceptory* (London, 1861), p. 109.

⁶² Johnson, p. 15; Forey, 'Recruitment', 163.

⁶³ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 70v–71; Weaver, pp. 171–2, nos 314–317.

⁶⁴ Ian Burrow, 'Minchin Buckland Priory: Topographical Notes', *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History*, 129 (1985), 111.

and Saint Nicholas. North of it stood the commandery of the brothers with an interior chapel dedicated to Saint John the Baptist.⁶⁵ The site also included farm buildings such as a dovecote and barns.⁶⁶

The sisters were responsible for the management of their own estates. The prioress controlled her own bookkeeping and decided on matters such as the sale of flax or wool. The *cosyner* and the cellaress, or two other appointed sisters, were in charge of the distribution of the sisters' grain. They oversaw the deliveries to the granary and kept the books. The sisters decided on the grain's use: how much was to be sold or purchased, and how much was to be used for baking, brewing, provender, seed, livery and gruel. The sisters were also responsible for the maintenance and repair of their buildings.⁶⁷ The prioress could appoint and, if necessary, dismiss a brother as steward in agreement with the prior. The steward had an attendant and a riding horse and collected rents, aids, and amercements on the sisters' behalf.

Many of the rents to be collected came from ecclesiastical sources. William de Erlegh's original grant to the Augustinian canons at Buckland had included three churches, each with lands and appurtenances and a chapel.⁶⁸ The sisters could not manage the churches themselves but farmed them out to vicars in return for a fixed pension. Petherton was the principal church in the original grant. It had two subordinate churches, Chedzoy and Pawlett, and the chapels of Huntworth, Earl's Newton, King's Newton, Thurloxton and Shurton. The Prior of England had the advowson of these churches and appointed its vicars.⁶⁹ In 1229 Pope Gregory IX responded to a complaint by the sisters of Buckland that the vicar of Petherton was taking too much of his church's earnings and thereby not leaving enough for the sisters' support.⁷⁰ Accordingly, an inventory of the income of this vicarage was made, which indicated the large variety of sources of income. It consisted of various small sums, none amounting to more than four marks. The benefits consisted of oblations made on Easter Day, the Assumption and Christmas, the burials of the dead, purification, requisitions and confessions which, together with offerings at Lent, totalled £12 6s 8d.⁷¹ The income also included tithes of calves, lambs, wool, young pigs, geese, cheese, garlic and leeks, cider, herbage, foals, milk, pears, flax, wax and honey, meat and the income from the mills and vicar's garden which, together with the tithes from Earl's Newton, came to £16 16s 4d. Furthermore, there was miscellaneous income from the rental of the chapels, visitation of the sick, masses for the dead, and hay; while on the death of a tenant the sisters received the

⁶⁵ Hugo, p. 111; Burrow, p. 110.

⁶⁶ Larking and Kemble, p. 17.

⁶⁷ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 6; Weaver p. 15, no. 19.

⁶⁸ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 1; Weaver, pp. 1–2, no. 1.

⁶⁹ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 4; Weaver, pp. 8–9, no. 12.

⁷⁰ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 4–4v; Weaver, pp. 9–10, nos 13 and 14 (includes the Latin text).

⁷¹ The account is expressed in marks and shillings, giving separate totals of 14 marks and 60s respectively. A mark at this period was two thirds of a pound, or 13s 4d.

second best animal of the deceased. The total income from the church of Petherton amounted to £39 2s, of which the sisters were paid a fixed pension of 66s 8d or five marks.⁷² The sisters' complaint about this low sum seems to have been in vain: at the end of the thirteenth century the vicarage was noted as owing them a smaller pension of only four marks.⁷³

In 1338 the Prior of England, Philip de Thame, sent a report on the financial state of the Order in England to the Master, Héliion de Villeneuve, at Rhodes. Although this report is not complete and may not be reliable, it gave detailed information on the economic state of both houses at Buckland. It indicated that the commandery's bakehouse was in a ruinous state and the roof of the *curia* of the manor of Buckland needed repair. The *membrum* of Halse with its manor was also in a poor state, and its income for one year could barely cover the necessary repairs. The incomes from the possessions of the brothers and sisters were reported as shown below in Table 4.1.⁷⁴

Counting the *confraria* payment as a spirituality, these figures showed that the brothers and sisters had a similar balance between income from spiritualities (brothers 41 per cent of their total income, sisters 46 per cent) and from temporalities (brothers 59 per cent of their total income, sisters 54 per cent), indicating a roughly similar economic basis for the two houses. The brothers had a slightly larger income than the sisters, but the sisters' income was increased by two pensions, one of 29 marks paid by the brothers of Buckland and one of three marks paid by the Order's headquarters in London.⁷⁵ As the income of the commandery and the priory were similar, financial differences between them must be sought in the expenses, although these are not given for the sisters. The expenses of the commandery were as shown below in Table 4.2. According to the report, there remained a sum of 61 marks, 7s. 4d. to be paid as responsions to the Priory's treasurer.⁷⁶

The expenses given in the report of 1338 showed that the endowments of Mynchin Buckland were insufficient to support the large number of sisters. Details on the sister's expenses were not given but they seem to have been limited to the sisters' own upkeep, while the commander was responsible for the prior's annual visit and some of the sisters' costs. The income of the two houses was similar, but while six brothers lived in the commandery, 50 sisters – a number probably including novices and others – were reported to live in the priory. The brothers' disposable income, that is after the expenses for the sisters and for the prior and

⁷² SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 4v; Weaver, pp. 10–11, no. 14 (provides the Latin text).

⁷³ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 5; Weaver, pp. 12–13, no. 16.

⁷⁴ Larking and Kemble, pp. 18–20.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 205.

⁷⁶ Larking and Kemble, p. 19. In fact subtracting expenses of 125 marks 3s from the total income of 201 marks 10s 4d. leaves a remainder of 76 marks 7s 4d. There is no indication in the report of where the other 15 marks has gone.

Table 4.1 Incomes from possessions of brothers and sisters at Buckland and Halse**Brothers**

Buckland:

Dovecote and garden		10s
268 acres of arable land	£12	16s
39 acres of meadow		78s
A small church		40s
2 mills with assize	£10	
Pleas and perquisites of the manor court		20s
Annual collection of the <i>confraria</i> ⁷⁷	80 marks	

Subtotal ⁷⁸	125 marks	4s
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Halse:

220 acres arable land	£10	16s	8d
28 acres pasture		18s	8d
18½ acres of meadow		37s	
52 acres of pasture		17s	8d
Proceeds of the assize	£20	3s	
Pleas and perquisites of manor court		40s	
Work and services of <i>nativi</i> (villeins)		40s	
Rectory	18 marks		
Pasture in moor and wood		6s	8d

Subtotal	76 marks	6s	4d
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TOTAL	201 marks	10s	4d ⁷⁹
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Sisters

3 carucates of land at Buckland	£6	
1 carucate of land at Thele, Devonshire		40s
1 carucate of land at Prunslee		40s
1 carucate of land at Kilmersdon		50s
Rent of assize levied	80 marks	
Church of Petherton	50 marks	
Church of Kilmersdon	20 marks	
Church of Broomfield	£10	

TOTAL:	183 marks	10s
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⁷⁷ *Confraria*: voluntary annual payment made in return for association with the Hospital and its exemptions.

⁷⁸ The subtotals given did not appear in the manuscript. Larking and Kemble, p. ix, mention 'the constantly recurring errors in the products and sums of the different items in the accounts'.

⁷⁹ The text (Larking and Kemble, p. 18) gives a total of 186 marks 10s and 4d. It is not clear how this is arrived at. The total given here is the total of the sums listed in the text.

Table 4.2 The expenses of the commandery

Wheat for bread	£14	2s
Wheat for beer	£11	14s
Expenses of the kitchen	£10	8s
Expenses to clothe commander and five brothers and other necessities	£10	8s
Stipend for the chaplain		20s
Stipends for the corrodary		18s
Robes for the commander's servants	1 mark	
Stipends of 4 clerks	£4	
Wages of servants		51s 8d
Stipends of 4 pages		8s
Repairs and roofing		40s
Prior's annual visit	£6	
Pension to sisters	29 marks	
TOTAL:	125 marks	3s ⁸⁰

the responsions are taken into account, amounted to about 102 marks 3s⁸¹ or 17 marks per brother. In contrast, the sisters' uncommitted income amounted to 215 marks 10s⁸² or only 4.3 marks per sister. According to the report, to clothe one brother cost £1 6s or roughly 2 marks.⁸³ If the same were paid for a robe and mantle for a sister, the cost for the 50 sisters reported in residence would amount to about 100 marks, or just over half of their total income. The Prior of England, Philip de Thame, acknowledged the insufficiency of the sisters' income and commented that Buckland's possessions did not suffice to support the number of sisters with their household, improvements to the buildings, clothes and their other necessities.⁸⁴ As a result, the priory and commandery at Buckland and the Priory of Clerkenwell, which had extra expenses as the Order's headquarters in England, were the only houses in England that showed a loss in 1338.⁸⁵

The women's poverty is not surprising, because the number of sisters at Buckland had increased dramatically since the house was founded, while their economic support had not. The Order often limited the number of sisters to the capacity of the respective houses. At Beaulieu, for example, the number was limited

⁸⁰ This total agrees with that in the text: Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

⁸¹ That is, 201 marks 10s 4d total income less 29 marks for the sisters' pension, £6 for the prior's annual visit and 61 marks 7s and 4d responsion.

⁸² That is, 183 marks 10s total income plus 29 marks from the brothers and 3 marks from the Order's headquarters in London.

⁸³ Larking and Kemble, p. xxxiii, quoting the figures for Dinmore.

⁸⁴ 'possessiones sufficere non possunt pro sustentatione dictarum sororum cum familia, emendatione domorum, vestura, et aliis necessariis earundem': *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20, 101.

to 39 in 1298 'in order to avoid getting an unsuitable and unsupportable number of sisters, beyond the means of the place'.⁸⁶ However, the Hospitallers did not limit the number of sisters at Buckland. The report of 1338 referred to an average of 50 sisters at Buckland (*in qua domo sunt communiter L sorores*),⁸⁷ while the house had been founded to support only nine. Subsequent donations had not increased at the same rate as the growth of the community. The cartulary did not indicate any large grants of estates after the foundation: the church at Petherton with lands, the church at Kilmersdon with its lands, and land at Buckland were all part of the original grant. Moreover, the 1338 report indicated that all but three carucates of Buckland manor, previously the property of the sisters, had fallen into the hands of the brothers. The result was a larger number of sisters than their estate could provide for.

Insufficient income forced the sisters to depend for their upkeep on their families and friends and on *elemosine*, in this context meaning entrance payments.⁸⁸ Although it was against the Rule, it was not uncommon for sisters to receive extra income as individuals. The regulations on this matter were eased in the thirteenth century when the Order allowed its members to have some private possessions.⁸⁹ For example in the 1230s Agnes, daughter of William of Arundel, received 40s each year from her father to maintain herself. By the king's order, these payments continued even after William's death.⁹⁰ Thomas de Berkeley contributed £4 a year towards the upkeep of his daughter Isabel, sister and prioress at Buckland who died in 1337.⁹¹ Sometimes the sisters benefited from bequests. When Robert Hylle requested burial in the church of Saint John at Buckland in 1423, he gave £20 to provide a jewel to adorn the body of Christ, 20s for the prioress, 8 marks to be divided among the sisters and 10s for each of the four brothers.⁹² Matilda Latimer left her daughter, a sister at Buckland, a set of 'bedes de corall'.⁹³ Elizabeth, daughter of Joan Sydenham and sister at Buckland in 1498, received 40s and a salt cellar of silver.⁹⁴ Gifts of 20s for the prioress and sisters were common in the fifteenth century.⁹⁵ These occasional acts of devotion and support from family members could not, however, prevent poverty among the sisters.

⁸⁶ *CH*, no 4413; cf. Forey, Chapter 2, pp. 58, 63.

⁸⁷ Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸⁹ *CH*, no. 2213 (99).

⁹⁰ *Close Rolls. Henry III: AD 1231–1234*, p. 165.

⁹¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward II: AD 1307–1313* (London, 1894), p. 385.

⁹² *Somerset Medieval Wills, 1383–1558*, ed. Frederic W. Weaver, 1 (London, 1901), p. 403.

⁹³ *Register of Edmund of Stafford, Bishop of Exeter, 1395–1419*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (London, 1886), p. 415.

⁹⁴ *Somerset Medieval Wills*, 1, pp. 363–4.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 17, 369, 378, 403.

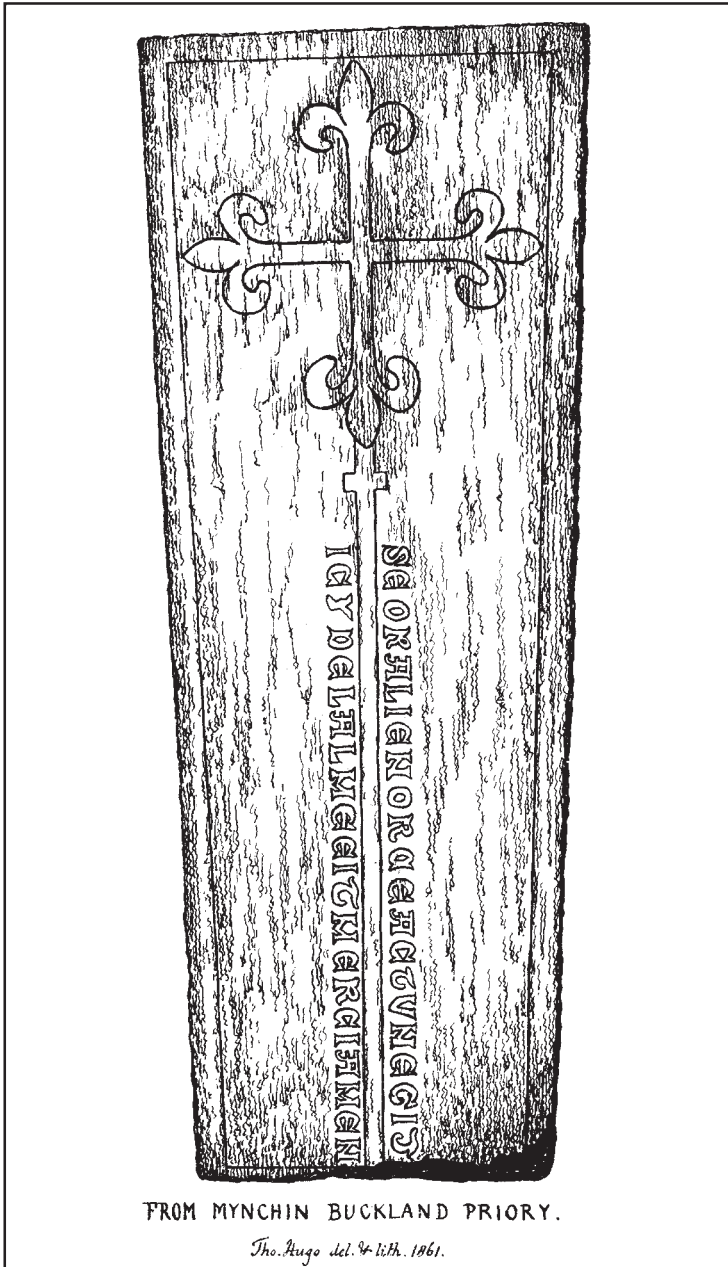


Fig. 4.3 Drawing of a grave slab with a medieval floriolate cross, found on the site of Buckland Priory. The inscription reads: 'Seor Alienor de Actune gist icy delame eit merci amen' (Sister Eleanor de Actune lies here: [may God] have mercy on her soul, amen.)

Problems with the collection of rents aggravated the sisters' financial situation. The reliance on fixed rents had probably worsened this situation when, during the thirteenth century, inflation eroded the value of the rents. In the fourteenth century, recurring pestilence and famine made the collection of these rents difficult. The Order tried to alleviate the sisters' financial distress in 1387, when the Master's *locum tenens* and the convent of Rhodes responded favourably to a supplication made by the Prior of England in the name of the prioress and sisters at Buckland, who claimed that they had fallen into great necessity because of the default of some rents of lands that had been given to them at the foundation of Buckland. The parcels of Chilterobe and Tolre were given to them by the General Chapter for financial support as well as three marks from the income from the manor of Hidown, which belonged to the Commandery of Templecombe, formerly of the Templars. Apparently, the sisters were supposed to get fixed incomes from certain lands that were managed by other commanderies. Other such incomes were 1 mark from the Commandery of Swynfeld in Kent, 4 marks from the Commandery of Carbrooke in Norfolk, and 4 marks from the Commandery of Greenham in Berkshire. The prior also ordered the Commander of Buckland to pay the sisters £22 in overdue rent for certain parcels of land as had been arranged by the provincial chapter.⁹⁶ By giving the sisters incomes from commanderies, the Order redistributed its wealth in their support.

The relationship between the brothers and sisters at Buckland was often strained since the sisters were responsible for their own estate but depended on the brothers to manage it successfully. Of course, the instances of discord have been disproportionately reported and the level of cooperation must largely have depended on the personal relationship between the commander and the prioress. In cases of discord, however, the Prior of the Order of Saint John in England supported the sisters. Roger de Vere, Prior of England (1265–72), settled several disagreements between the brothers and sisters in his time. He allowed the prioress to have her own steward. The steward was a brother who dwelt in the Commandery of Buckland, but the commander had little say over the appointment. The steward's attendant also stayed in the commandery and ate with the commander's servants. The commander also had to provide for the meals of the secular priest employed to say mass for the souls of Fina, the first prioress, and of the founders and benefactors of the sisters. He also allowed them the use of 36 oxen, 12 cows and one bull independently from the brothers. Furthermore, the sisters were to be able to repair their house, the spring and the conduit from the spring without being disturbed. The provisions indicate that the sisters had not been able to manage their estate efficiently because of tensions with the brothers. The prior, with the consent of the chapter, intervened on their behalf in the hope of 'perpetual peace'.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 6–6v; Weaver, pp. 16–17, no. 21.

⁹⁷ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fol. 5v; Weaver, pp. 14–15, no. 19.

The peace did not last. The brothers were often frustrated because they felt burdened with the care of the sisters. The report of 1338 complained that the brothers had 'nothing except trouble and burden' from the sisters.⁹⁸ Tensions recurred in 1387, when the prior made a supplication to Pierre de Culant, *locum tenens* or lieutenant of the Master at Rhodes, on behalf of the sisters concerning their financial distress. The main reason for the sisters' financial problem was the default on rents of several parcels of land that had been part of the original foundation. Among others, the commanderies of Carbrooke (Norfolk), Greenham (Berkshire) and Swynfeld (Kent) were at fault as well as the Commandery at Buckland itself, which owed the sisters £22. Rather than arranging financial matters among themselves, the brothers and sisters sought mediation by a superior and the convent at Rhodes ruled in the sisters' favour.⁹⁹ At the end of the century, cooperation was difficult yet again. The sisters complained to the Prior of England about a lack of wood. He decided that the sisters would receive a parcel of wooded land belonging to the brothers in return for a rent. The brothers apparently had enough wood but did not share it with the sisters until forced to do so by their superior.¹⁰⁰ Problems in the relationship between brothers and sisters existed at a local level, but the complaints did not reflect the Order's general policy and attitude. Despite the tensions between the brothers and sisters at Buckland, the Order continued to support its female members.

The history of Buckland began and ended with a royal decision. During the reign of Henry VIII the existence of religious houses came under scrutiny. Early in 1539 the king's commissioners William Petre, John Tremlow and John Smith visited and dissolved the houses of Somerset. They met little resistance. In January William Petre had written to Thomas Cromwell, the king's minister, to ask whether Cromwell had meant Buckland Monachorum 'or that other of the nuns'.¹⁰¹ After clarification as to which house they had to dissolve, they arrived at Mynchin Buckland.¹⁰² The Order had consolidated many of its commanderies in the latter half of the fifteenth century and since January 1500 the Commandery at Buckland had existed only in name. Its lands were farmed out and the only remaining brother, the commander, was the sisters' chaplain.¹⁰³ When the commissioners arrived at Buckland on 10 February 1539, Prioress Katherine Bouchier surrendered her

⁹⁸ 'Prior nec fratres nichil debent habere nec capere sed potius onus et gravamen': Larking and Kemble, p. 19.

⁹⁹ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 6–6v; Weaver, pp. 16–17, no. 21.

¹⁰⁰ SRO, MS DD/SAS SX133, fols 46–46v: 'nos predicti Prior et fratres considerantes immensum defecione quem carissime nobis in Christo Priorissa et sorores sustinent'; Weaver, pp. 110–11, no. 191.

¹⁰¹ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie, 14 part 1 (London, 1894), no. 78.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, no. 270.

¹⁰³ Hugo, pp. 229–32 (transcript of London, British Library, MS Landsdowne 200, fols 84, 84v).

house. Like other religious, she and her sisters received in return a pension from the crown, the amount of which depended upon the condition of the estate and the personal situation of each of the religious. The Crown promised Katherine £50, Mary Sydam, the sub prioress, £4 13s 4d, and each of the other 11 sisters £4 per annum.¹⁰⁴ After more than 350 years, Buckland's doors were shut.

The male Hospitallers took their female members seriously. The sisters contributed to the Order by bringing it 'profits and honours' at their reception,¹⁰⁵ and through the celebration of the liturgy once they had become sisters. Their houses were potential economic assets, but even when impoverished, as at Buckland, the sisters enjoyed support from the Order. Furthermore, despite tensions that resulted from a lack of cooperation between brothers and sisters at the local level, and despite contemporary debate regarding the desirability of women in male-dominated religious orders, there was no coordinated effort to reduce the number of female Hospitallers. The presence of contemplative women in the Order of Saint John was not an anomaly; rather it helped to shape the identity of the Hospitallers in England.

¹⁰⁴ *Letters and Papers*, 14 part 1, p. 106.

¹⁰⁵ *CH*, no. 3039 (22).

Chapter 5

The Aragonese Hospitaller Monastery of Sigena: its Early Stages, 1188–c. 1210

Luis García-Guijarro Ramos

Sigena, one of the most important Hospitaller female communities in Europe from both quantitative and qualitative standpoints, has received more attention than other such houses both from historians and from scholars of art history. The monastery was plundered in August 1936 at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.¹ The destruction not only halted monastic life which had continued since 1188 with a hiatus in the nineteenth century due to the *desamortización*,² but meant the loss of the elaborate wooden roof, considerable sections of the valuable Romanesque mural paintings of the chapter house and also part of the monastic archive. A substantial quantity of parchments and manuscripts was fortunately saved and is now kept in the Provincial Archive of Huesca.³ Their still impressive number, more than 300 pieces for the period 1184–1300, allowed Agustín Ubieto Arteta to develop the only modern study with some historiographical value; other later studies show more enthusiasm than intellectual soundness.⁴

¹ Juan Manuel Palacios Sánchez, *Real Monasterio de Sijena. Memoria histórico-descriptiva de los acontecimientos acaecidos desde el año 1936 a 1954* (Calahorra, 1954). The Latin name *Sexena* was transcribed literally as *Sixena* in early Castilian. Afterwards the ‘x’ evolved into either a ‘g’ or a ‘j’; both Sigena and Sijena are correct and used nowadays.

² After the Civil War Hospitaller *sorores* returned to Sigena, but in 1970 they left it for good; the few remaining sisters were transferred to the monastery of Valldoreig in Barcelona. In 1975 Cistercian nuns took charge of the monastic premises, but soon they gave up, discouraged by the unhealthy nature of their buildings and surroundings. In 1985 a community of the Order of Bethlehem, which has strong Carthusian influences, took over and remains in Sigena until the present day: Carmen Berlabé, ‘Fundación y patronato real en el monasterio de Sigena (Huesca). De Alfonso el Casto a Jaime el Justo’, in *Imágenes y promotores en el arte medieval. Miscelánea en homenaje a Joaquín Yarza Luaces*, ed. María Luis Melero Moneo et al. (Barcelona, 2001), pp. 258–9.

³ Agustín Ubieto Arteta, ‘La documentación de Sigena (1188–1300)’, *Saitabi*, 15 (1966).

⁴ *Idem*, *El Real Monasterio de Sigena (1188–1300)* (Valencia, 1966); Julio P. Arribas Salaverri, *Historia de Sijena* (Lleida, 1975); Juan Manuel Palacios Sánchez, *El Real monasterio de Sijena. Introducción a la historia del monasterio*, 2nd edn (Huesca, 1994).

Local historians and scholars gathered information or published material on Sigena before 1936. The main interest of these writings, above all those of Mariano de Pano y Ruata, lies in their reference to sources lost before and during the Civil War.⁵ He made extensive use of the chronicle of the early-seventeenth-century Prior of Sigena, Fr Jaime Juan Moreno, who transcribed, extracted or cited materials which subsequently disappeared. Moreno's three-volume manuscript vanished after 1936. It was found in 1973 and Karl Frederick Schuler made extensive use of it in the course of his research on Sigena's chapter house murals.⁶ Ubieta's study covers the thirteenth century. Apart from the valuable catalogue of numerous documents of the Aragonese Royal Archive published by Regina Sáinz de la Maza y Lasoli, nothing substantial has been done for the subsequent periods.⁷ But even the founding and development of the monastery down to the reign of Jaime II (1291–1327) is poorly known. Ubieta provided no more than a superficial description of the content of the sources, which he collected separately in a *diplomatarium* that was intended to reach 1300, although only the first volume down to 1237 was published.⁸

This study will go back to the origins and the first stages of the convent. Ubieta, like Mariano de Pano before him, left unexplained the main trends of a period that marked the future not only of Sigena but also of other Hospitaller foundations across Europe. The years in which Sancha of Castile, Queen of Aragon, controlled the monastery were fundamental to the understanding of future medieval and

References to basic facts and sources by Delaville le Roulx cannot be ignored (*CH*, 1, pp. ccxxii–ccxxiv).

⁵ Mariano de Pano y Ruata, *El Real Monasterio de Sijena. Su historia y descripción* (Lleida, 1883); *idem*, *El Real Monasterio de Sijena*, ed. José Ángel Sesma Muñoz (Zaragoza, 2004), manuscript of c. 1896 which has been edited with language changes, omissions and introductory studies; *idem*, *El Monasterio de Sijena. La Serie Prioral* (Zaragoza, 1932); *idem*, *La Santa Reina Doña Sancha, humilde hermana hospitalaria, fundadora del monasterio de Sijena* (Zaragoza, 1944). See also Wifredo Rincón García, *Vida y obra del humanista aragonés Mariano de Pano y Ruata* (Monzón, 1997), and *idem*, 'El humanista aragonés Mariano de Pano y Ruata', in Sesma ed., pp. xix–xlii.

⁶ Fr Jaime Juan Moreno, *Jerusalén Religiosa, celestial o sancta. Historia del Real Monasterio de Nuestra Señora de Sixena de religiosas del Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén del Reino de Aragón*: Archivo Diocesano de Huesca, sección 7–3/128 and 130; Archivo Provincial de Huesca [APH], S-58/5; María Carmen Lacarra Ducay, 'El manuscrito de don Mariano de Pano y Ruata sobre el Real Monasterio de Santa María de Sijena (Huesca) y su importancia para la Historia del Arte', in Sesma ed., p. cxxvii n. 18; Karl Frederick Schuler, 'The Pictorial Program of the Chapterhouse of Sigena', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Ann Arbor, 1994.

⁷ Regina Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, *El monasterio de Sijena. Catálogo de documentos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, vol. 1 (1208–1348) (Barcelona, 1994), vol. 2 (1348–1451) (Barcelona, 1998). There are only five documents prior to the year 1260 and none before 1208.

⁸ Agustín Ubieta Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1 (Valencia, 1972).

early-modern developments. She was not only the founder of the house, but its main driving and directing force, the *dominatrix* in the words of her husband, King Alfonso II.⁹ The main trends that distinguished Sigena from the men's houses of the Order were shaped in the period between 1188 and 1208; some of them were common to other Hospitaller *sorores* outside Aragon. Sigena was a royal foundation and that meant far more than a patronizing, but detached, attitude on the part of the founder. Queen Sancha was the real head of the house, unquestionably superior to the official *priorissa*. This involvement had something to do with Sancha's own personality, but it established a tradition of direct royal intervention which emerged again clearly in 1321, when Jaime II pressed for his daughter Blanca to be appointed prioress by the pope.¹⁰ Before the monastery was set up, Sancha realized that neither the Rule of Saint Augustine nor the Hospital's rule drawn up by the Master Raymond de Puy were suitable to the situation, because hospitaller activity was out of the question in the remote and deserted region of Monegros and the general outline provided by Augustine of Hippo seemed too vague for everyday life. The result was the very precise set of regulations written by Ricardo, Bishop of Huesca, which were applied to the new foundation when it was only a few months old. They fixed clearly the character of a monastery of *sorores* and *fratres* in which men were to be subjected to the authority of the prioress, an arrangement shared by some other women's houses of the Hospital. This monastic unit enjoyed from the very beginning considerable autonomy within the Hospitaller priory to which it belonged, the Castellany of Amposta. This meant an often tense relationship with senior officials of the Order, a permanent trend in medieval times until a final settlement was reached in 1498, which nonetheless did not prevent quarrels thereafter. Monarchical influence, a rule of its own, a monastic group of *sorores* and *fratres* under the direction of the prioress, an uneasy insertion into Hospitaller administrative structures, these four were the basic trends of Sigena in the Middle Ages; they were shaped in the first decades after the foundation of the house.

Foundation and Early Years

Strictly speaking, Sigena was not the first convent of Hospitaller women founded in Aragon. In December 1177 Alfonso II gave the castle of Grisén, in the valley of the river Jalón, to Pedro López de Luna, Castellan of Amposta, and to *domina* Mayor,

⁹ April 1188: *ibid.*, no. 7 = Ana Isabel Sánchez Casabón, *Alfonso II Rey de Aragón, Conde de Barcelona y Marqués de Provenza. Documentos (1162–1196)* (Zaragoza, 1995), no. 466. January 1193: Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 12 = Sánchez Casabón, no. 583.

¹⁰ Johannes Vincke, *Documenta selecta mutuas civitatis Arago-Cathalaunicae et Ecclesiae relationes illustrantia* (Barcelona, 1936), no. 363 (22 April 1321). On Blanca de Aragón, see Jesús Ernesto Martínez Ferrando, *Jaime II de Aragón. Su vida familiar*, vol. 1 (Barcelona, 1948), pp. 169–78, and Julio P. Arribas Salaverri, *Doña Blanca de Aragón y de Anjou, XVI priora del Real Monasterio de Sijena* (Lleida, 1973).

who was meant to live there with her companions, all of them apparently Hospitaller sisters, under the protection of the king; the Castellan and the *fratres* of the Order were admonished not to move the *dominae* from that house.¹¹ The new foundation did not, apparently, thrive. No mention of Mayor or her companions is attested after May 1178, while Grisén became a dependency of the Commandery of Zaragoza. In September 1190 the castle was in the power of the noble Jordán de Pina's son, who paid homage to the king for it,¹² but the Hospitallers continued to hold the place in the thirteenth century. The *sorores* reappeared in 1240, but only for 20 years. After 1260 all traces of a female monastery vanished.¹³ Grisén looks like a short-term and immature experience with no influence on other houses.

As was common in other monasteries, the origins of Sigena were rooted in a legend. This imaginary narrative assumed a previous void that ran contrary to the existing Templar and Hospitaller buildings.¹⁴ Its contents lacked originality. We know them through the works of the chroniclers of the house; the writings of the eighteenth-century historian Fr Marco Antonio Varón are the most relevant. Traditional elements were introduced, such as the persistent miraculous movement of an image of the Virgin to a certain place and the intervention of humble people who thus became agents disclosing the divine will. A shepherd, intrigued by the repetitive tendency of a cow to leave the herd for an islet formed by the Alcanadre River, soon found that the animal was prostrated before the statue that used to stand in the local church of the nearby village of Sigena. All efforts to put the image back there or in the churches of neighbouring Sena or Urgellet proved fruitless, as it always returned to the islet. Queen Sancha, impressed by the event, decided to comply with the Virgin's wishes and to build a monastery there.¹⁵

The legend was probably a later product, because no reference to it appeared in the early texts of the monastery. But if it was not entirely a *post eventum* ideological construction, it may perhaps give some clue to the puzzling decision to establish a religious house in a hostile environment so damp that permanent residence in the monastic premises could never be enforced there, not even after the Council of Trent

¹¹ María Luisa Ledesma Rubio, 'Colección diplomática de Grisén (Siglos XII y XIII)', *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón*, 10 (1975), no. 5 = CH, no. 523 = Sánchez Casabón, no. 243.

¹² *Ibid.*, no. 519.

¹³ Ledesma Rubio, 'Colección diplomática', 693–4; *idem*, *Templarios y Hospitalarios en el Reino de Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1982), pp. 124, 135, 187; *idem*, *Las Órdenes Militares en Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1994), pp. 50–51, 63.

¹⁴ Below, p. 121.

¹⁵ Fr Marco Antonio Varón, *Historia del Real Monasterio de Sixena*, vol. 1 (Pamplona, 1773), pp. 12–30; M. de Pano, *La Santa Reina*, pp. 17–20. A description of Varón's work and some references to his life are in Juan Bassegoda Nonell, 'La historia de Sigena de Fr. Marco Antonio Varón. Algunas consideraciones sobre el Monasterio y los textos a él referidos', *Boletín de Bellas Artes*, 2nd series, 3 (1975).

which firmly assured seclusion in women's convents.¹⁶ Sigena, and Sena further up, were placed on the left bank of the lower course of the Alcanadre, a river which springs from the pre-Pyrenean Sierra of Guara and joins the river Cinca a few kilometres east of Sigena. At this final point of its course, the current of the Alcanadre frequently overflowed its river bed in the Middle Ages; only Urgellet on the right bank remained unaffected, as it was placed halfway up a mountain range which closed the river valley from the south. News of that miraculous story might have reached Queen Sancha and have so impressed her that she set her mind on building a monastery in such unfavourable surroundings. She probably hoped that the new foundation would bring life to a zone which was of vital importance for the Crown because it connected major cities, such as Huesca, Zaragoza and Lleida, and which remained quite deserted, even though it had been in Christian hands for some decades.

Sena and Sigena had been given to the Hospitallers by Ramón Berenguer IV in 1157;¹⁷ in 1174 Bernardo de Pallars was their commander;¹⁸ in 1177 that dignity was held by Ermerico who, as representative of the Hospital in the area, received a piece of land in Alcolea offered by the new lay affiliate Sancho Aznar.¹⁹ The Order of Saint John was greatly favoured by King Alfonso II. The pro-Hospitaller attitude of the monarchy was an important asset favouring Sancha's project to enhance the Order's presence in the region in a new way. Religious fervour stimulated by the news of miracles, the development of an underpopulated area, sympathy for the Order and perhaps the wish to set up a great domain of her own under the cover of a pious foundation were all at the root of Sancha's decision,²⁰ which required

¹⁶ A post-Trent late sixteenth-century report insisted on the unhealthy nature of the spot: 'si servanda esset in hoc monasterio clausura stricte, ut mandatur per sacrum Concilium Tridentinum, et dictas Constitutiones Apostólicas subsequutas, nulle puelle nobiles, vel saltem valde pauce reperirentur que volent includere se in hoc monasterio, cum non ad serviendum Deo, sed ad moriendum viderent se descendere in locum pestilentem et mortiferum et ex hoc causaretur destructio dicti Monasterii quod stantibus pro dictis quilibet facile posset indicare, et ita communiter tentum fuit, et tenetur, et fuit et est publica vox et fama': APH, S-58/4. Pascual Madoz described the setting in the nineteenth century as 'melancólico y mal sano': *Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico-Histórico de España y sus Posesiones de Ultramar*, vol. 14 (Madrid, 1849), p. 395.

¹⁷ Próspero de Bofarull i Mascaró, ed., *Colección de documentos inéditos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, vol. 4 (Barcelona, 1849), no. xciv = CH, no. 251 (p. ccxxii wrongly gives the year 1158).

¹⁸ José María Lacarra, *Documentos para el estudio de la Reconquista y repoblación del valle del Ebro*, vol. 2 (Zaragoza, 1985), no. 412; CH, no. 465 (summary); Joaquim Miret y Sans, *Les cases de Templers y Hospitalers en Catalunya. Aplech de noves y documents històrics* (Barcelona, 1910), p. 192.

¹⁹ Archivo Histórico Nacional [AHN], Sección de Órdenes Militares [SOM], Pergaminos, carp. 705, no. 1 (5 August 1177).

²⁰ Some chronicles suggested marital disagreements between the king and the queen due to Alfonso II's switch of alliances from Castile to Navarre in the years previous to 1190, a

preliminary manoeuvring for its accomplishment. Sena and Sigena belonged to the Hospitallers, but the churches of the two villages had been donated to the Templars some time earlier. They had to be recovered for the project to be feasible. Sancha's first move had this aim.

In June 1184 Queen Sancha reached an agreement with the provincial authorities of the Temple to exchange the castle of Santa Lecina and all the Hospitaller rights in Pueyo de Monzón for the above-mentioned churches.²¹ Both places were located in the middle course of the river Cinca below Monzón and belonged totally or partially to the Hospitallers, whose main regional dignitaries, specifically the Prior of Saint-Gilles, the Castellan of Amposta, the Commander of Amposta and that of Calatayud, gave permission for the transaction. King Alfonso II formally approved the document, a possible indication that the monarch supported the whole project. The most relevant Templar and Hospitaller provincial officials were present. The fact that the Castellan Pedro Jiménez de Luna, probably a relative of Pedro López de Luna, the first dignitary to hold that title in 1177, was mentioned after Ermengol de Aspa, Prior of Saint-Gilles and *magister in Provincia et toto regno Aragonum*, shows the overlapping of old and new administrative divisions and the desire that such an important exchange of properties should be approved by any Hospitaller authority which might claim jurisdiction over the zone. An alternative explanation would be to see in Pedro Jiménez de Luna a subordinate figure under Ermengol de Aspa, the main Castellan or *magister in toto regno Aragonum*.

The agreement of June 1184 probably did not take effect as some years later. At some point before October 1187 Ermengol de Aspa, still acting as both Prior of Saint-Gilles and Castellan of Amposta, secured the assent of senior Hospitallers in the West for the castle of Santa Lecina to be given to Queen Sancha on condition that it be used to bring the churches of Sena and Sigena under the control of the monastery to be founded in the latter place; this new accord was formally accepted by Queen Sancha in October 1187.²² The fortress at Santa Lecina would revert to the Hospital in the event that it did not become part of that transaction. The Castellan also donated the villages of Sena, Sigena and Urgellet to the queen as a base for the new foundation, which was to collect all Aragonese and Catalan *sorores* who would profess in the Order, allowing them to live a communal life together: *possent ibi*

movement that must have upset Sancha, a Castilian by birth and aunt of Alfonso VIII of Castile: Martin Aurell, *Les noces du comte: Marriage et pouvoir en Catalogne (785–1213)* (Paris, 1995), pp. 377–8. If such dissension existed, Sancha might have wished to strengthen her own territorial position in Aragon.

²¹ APH, S-1/6 (copy of 1243). *CH*, no. 677 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 4. Whenever possible, Delaville's transcriptions are preferable to Ubieto's. English translation of the text in Schuler, pp. 225–7. Pueyo de Monzón is nowadays the village of Pueyo de Santa Cruz.

²² *CH*, no. 835 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 5; English translation in Schuler, pp. 229–33. The copy of 1200 kept at AHN, SOM, Pergaminos, carp. 705, no. 1 bis, included neither the *signa* of the queen, the Hospitaller officials nor of the scribe, nor the date of the charter. Cf. Anthony Luttrell, 'Ermengol de Aspa, *Provisor* of the Hospital: 1188', *Crusades*, 4 (2005).

habitare in unum. The wording was not very explicit, because it referred to the future not to the past, but it seems to have implied that women who had previously professed in the Order did not live in a female community of their own. The queen took the initiative for these donations, which made the founding of the new house possible. Hospitaller authorities insisted that the transfer of the villages and the castle had been made after the frequent requests – *crebras preces* – by Sancha to an unnamed Hospitaller Master, presumably Roger de Moulins who was killed in the battle at the Spring of the Cresson on 1 May 1187, and to Gaufridus, the treasurer and overseer of the western territories of the Order. Sancha's firm commitment was reaffirmed by her explicit offer of her person to the monastery, by the choice of that place for her burial, and by her assurance that she would not transfer her allegiance to any other order. From that moment she was probably a *consoror* of Sigena.

Ermengol de Aspa did more than hand to Sancha the villages on which to base the dominion of the new house. A special type of Hospitaller unit was about to be born and the Prior of Saint-Gilles settled the main lines which would guide its inner life and its relationship with the provincial government of the Order, a nexus whose character had to be defined because the monastery could not be the exact equivalent of a commandery. The project was at that moment a total novelty, a distinction shared with Buckland in England, which had already been established by 1187, and Manetin in Bohemia. This feature was stressed a year later by Ermengol de Aspa when, as *Provisor* of the Order, he and senior officials of the Order approved the Rule written by the Bishop of Huesca for the new foundation.²³ That novelty, expressed in the charter of October 1188 with the words *novus modus et sororibus nostris inconsuetus vivendi*, referred less to the feminine character of Sigena, since there had been female vocations for decades, than to its centripetal conception. The house was meant to receive *dominae* from anywhere in the Castellany. That geographical spread would be reflected in the donations to be offered by newcomers to the monastery at the time of their entry. The prior sought to avoid the difficulties that might have arisen if the convent had to control a scattered landed patrimony. He established that the convent would freely keep any movables handed to Sigena by the new *sorores* but, in the case of houses or lands, the monastery would retain only those within the Kingdom of Aragon, while those beyond these boundaries would pass to the Castellany, which would provide Sigena with goods of similar value in Aragon.²⁴ This decision was followed thereafter in general terms and it facilitated the administrative tasks of the *fratres* in charge of the monastic economy.

²³ CH, no. 860; Antonio Durán Gudiol, 'La Regla del Monestir de Santa Maria de Sixena', *Scripta et Documenta*, 12 = *Monastica*, 1 (Montserrat, 1960), p. 167; Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8.

²⁴ Schuler, p. 18, provides another interpretation of these lines based not on the geographical origins of the sisters but on the difference between those already associated with the Hospital and those newly entering the Order; his reading confines the time scope of the arrangement to the initial stages of the house.

At that time, the Prior of Saint-Gilles openly gave the prioresses power over the new double community; they would control ‘*fratres etiam sorores atque confratres ... tam clerici quam laici*’. The whole community would comply with the set of precepts common to all Hospitallers, although a year later an ad hoc Rule of Sigena, contemplating the specific requirements of the house, became the basic code regulating its everyday life. The prioresses’ care of the *sorores* and over a complex unit, which comprised *fratres* and all sorts of dependants, as well as the production of a specific regulation that took into account the peculiarities of the new foundation were obvious moves, undoubtedly determined by Queen Sancha. They required, furthermore, a clear outline of the place of the prioress within the Hospitaller structure and of the ultimate prevalence of the Castellan of Amposta. The text of 1187 dealt at length with the relationship between Sigena and the Castellany.

The balance of power between the queen and the Order was shown in the requirements for electing prioresses. The *sorores* would decide but the Castellan had to be consulted, and so had Queen Sancha while she lived.²⁵ Sigena was as much a royal monastery as a Hospitaller community. The dignitaries of the Order made sure that royal influence did not dilute the natural hierarchy within the institution. The head of the convent would always be obedient to the Castellan, who would not be allowed to remove the prioress at his will, but only *canonice* and with the accord of the whole community of *sorores*. A balance between the prioress and the Castellan was achieved in relation to the movement of sisters and brothers in and out of the monastery. That officer could not introduce any *soror* to the house, expel or move her without the prioress’ consent. On the other hand, the head of the convent could not bring in *sorores*, *fratres* or *confratres* without the Castellan’s agreement. The number of male members of the community would be fixed by the prioress; if necessary she could decide on new entries, but always with the knowledge of the Castellan who would provide them. Disciplinary powers would normally rest within the monastery and would follow procedures general among Hospitallers. If the fault were of such a serious nature that the prioress could not judge it by herself, she would call in the Castellan and proceed with his knowledge and counsel. Submission to and protection from the head of the Castellany were clearly expressed in the two last points dealt with by Ermengol de Aspa. The prioress was bound to attend the annual general chapter of the Aragonese and Catalan *fratres*, but apparently only if it were held within the Kingdom of Aragon. The convent would send a responson to the central headquarters in the East. Its amount would be fixed

²⁵ ‘Ipsa autem priorissa numquam eligatur sine consilio magistri et vestro [regine] quandiu vixeritis et sororum eiusdem loci’: AHN, SOM, Pergaminos, carp. 705, no. 1 bis (copy of 1200) and no. 2 = CH, no. 835 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 5. The order of the different powers is relevant. Technically elections were internal, but external pressures must have been decisive.

by the head of the community; this *heleмосina* was thus not determined by the authorities in Amposta but was to be decided freely by the prioress.²⁶

The new monastery was likely to accumulate great debts in its early stages; if that happened, the Castellan would support it financially. Queen Sancha probably pressed for a financial safety net that could rescue Sigena if it were in distress. If these were her fears, they proved to be well founded. The convent and the queen herself ran into considerable debt most probably related to the construction programme and in 1202 the Hospitaller regional authorities had to ask Pedro II to free the Order from that previous commitment. The Prior of Saint-Gilles's clauses and the type of monastery they depict have to be regarded as a compromise between the centralizing tendencies of the Order and the autonomy which Sancha deemed essential to maintain her effective influence over the new house. Sigena was still only a project but its shape had to be determined before its foundation. The blueprint agreed in October 1187 established a balance of forces which was to change in times to come, as the monastery and the Order to which it belonged began to progress along divergent lines.

Sigena had been set up by April 1188 when Alfonso II offered it Candanos, which was the first big territorial grant made to the new house and not just to Queen Sancha.²⁷ The eighteenth-century historian Fr Ramón de Huesca stated that the monastery had already been built by the beginning of 1188, and that its church was consecrated by Bishop Ricardo on 21 April of that year. It is difficult to accept that the *suntuosa fábrica* had been concluded by such an early date but, as the king's charter was addressed to a foundation that seems to have been already physically established, we may assume that earlier commandery buildings must have been occupied, including a church which might have been the chapel used by the Hospitallers since 1157, as Jacques Gardelles thinks,²⁸ or even the *ecclesia* in

²⁶ 'Et de bonis sue domus, secundum quod sibi visum fuerit, suas annuatim helemosinas infirmis pauperibus Hospitalis Jherosolimis transmissura'. CH, no. 835, and Pano, *El Real Monasterio de Sigena*, App. 1, read *visum fuerit*, implying that the convent would fix its own contribution. Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 5, gave *iusum fuerit*, implying that the Castellany's officials would determine the sum. The latter might seem more plausible since it would be most strange that the convent should determine its own dues. Nevertheless, Delaville's and Ubieto's transcription of the papal charter of 1 October 1207, which repeated with changes the clauses of 1187, both chose the reading *visum fuerit*, and that option was confirmed by additions made to the clause in 1207: below, p. 147, n. 150.

²⁷ Ibid., no. 7 = Sánchez Casabón, no. 466 (the text does not include the geographical limits of the donation nor the king's *signum*).

²⁸ It is significant that the chapter house was built on the northern side of the old commandery church and not in connection with the eastward extension datable to the first half of the thirteenth century. This proves that the new section of the church had not been constructed when the first new premises for the women's monastery were raised, presumably in Queen Sancha's time: J. Gardelles, 'Le prieuré de Sigena aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles: étude architecturale', *Bulletin Monumental*, 135 (1975).

Templar hands until at least October 1187. The earlier existence of Hospitaller and Templar premises questions the legendary story of a foundation *ex nihilo*. Fr Ramón de Huesca added that on 23 April 1188 the first 13 *sorores* professed, among them Dulce, Alfonso II's and Sancha's youngest daughter.²⁹

Although Alfonso II's donation of Candanos in the Monegros region southeast of Sigena did not materialize until 1209,³⁰ the prompt generosity of the monarch showed both his complete accord with the queen's policy and his vision of the function that the monastery should fulfil in that area. Candanos was given with the basic objective of populating it, which did not just mean bringing in new settlers but developing that territory along existing seigneurial lines. In March 1188 Queen Sancha had completed negotiations with the Hospitallers.³¹ In exchange for the villages and castle offered to her by Ermengol de Aspa in the previous year she gave the Order Codogn, an estate in the vicinity of Tarragona which had been transferred to her by Alfonso II upon their marriage. Sancha's intention of assigning the area to the Hospital had been stated clearly at Ayerbe in November 1187 when she gave it to the Order. The new charter of March 1188 formally handed Codogn to the Hospitaller authorities and it contained far more information about Sigena than the text of the preceding November. The wording of the document of March 1188 showed that the female monastery had been founded – 'damus [magister Emposte atque fratres] ... villam et monasterium de Sixena' – and that the sisters' monastic buildings were yet to be raised – 'ad construendum et hedificandum monasterium et habitaculum dominarum'. Sancha mentioned for the first time that she had ordered a supplement to be added to what she considered to be the existing Rule of Saint Augustine, an initiative that had been approved by the Hospitaller *Provisor* or acting Master, by the Castellan of Amposta and by other *fratres* who appeared in that text.³² Some of them might have already been in Sigena; thus, Lupo de Fillera, was mentioned two years later as *preceptor domus Sisene*, the first known commander after the founding of the monastery.³³ As in the previous donation of October 1187, García de Lisa, Castellan of Amposta, added some points. Queen Sancha must have

²⁹ Fr Ramón de Huesca, *Teatro histórico de las iglesias del Reyno de Aragón*, 6 (Pamplona, 1796), pp. 209–10.

³⁰ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 55.

³¹ APH, S-1/8 (copy of the late thirteenth century): Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 6; English translation in Schuler, pp. 235–8.

³² Text of November 1187 in *CH*, no. 837. That of March 1188 read 'cum consilio et voluntate magistri Iherosolimitani et consilio et voluntate fratris Garssia de Lisa, magister Emposte, et consilio et voluntate supradicti fratres': Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 6. The text did not mention the name of the *magister Iherosolimitanus*, but the writer must have had in mind Ermengol de Aspa, whom he thought had been promoted to the Mastership in the East, although he ruled the Order only as *Provisor* for a short period in the difficult times after Hattin, perhaps until the election of Garnier de Nablus as proper Master: see Luttrell, 'Ermengol de Aspa'.

³³ *CH*, no. 896 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 9.

been concerned about possible dictatorial interventions by the Order at Sigena. García de Lisa assured her that neither the Prior of Saint-Gilles nor the Castellan would force the prioress or any *soror* out of the convent and that no *frater* would act against the monastery. He also made clear the Order's goodwill to the founder by offering her a chaplain to pray for her soul, as well as for the king and their family, in any house of the Order that Sancha might choose within Aragon.

Queen Sancha continued to play a leading role in the affairs of the monastery after it had been founded and after its first prioress, Sancha de Abiego, had been elected.³⁴ When Sigena began to rent its lands, the queen was the main representative of the house and her name appeared in the contracts before that of the prioress or of the Commander of Sigena. That was the case in November 1192 when Sancha offered Salvador de Aguas and his family a Hospitaller estate in Aguas, on the southern fringes of the Sierra de Guara, subject to the payment of a ninth of several agricultural products and to the usual conditions if the new holders wanted to sell the *hereditas*.³⁵ Two years earlier, in August 1190, Sancha was the directing monastic figure when the convent rented an orchard to 12 Jews in Huesca. The prioress and the commander were in a subordinate position throughout; Sancha de Abiego was not even mentioned in the introduction. The queen simply acted '*assensu et voluntate totius conventus dominarum domus Sisene*'. The piece of land that was being rented had previously been given to Sigena by the Prioress Sancha de Abiego when she entered the house.³⁶ Entry dowries were a constant way of increasing monastic property. Bearing in mind that a significant number of the *sorores* came from the upper sections of society, it is reasonable to think that they did not enter Sigena empty-handed. But information is scanty, because few relevant documents have been preserved.³⁷ Although the global importance of dowries grew when donations declined after the second third of the thirteenth century, they were present from the very beginning. In March 1206 María, widow of Pedro de Novals, offered her two daughters, Tota and Estefanía, as *sorores* at Sigena. She gave the monastery an estate in Huesca and part of the rights over a mill on the river Flumen.³⁸ In October 1207 Guillerma entered the convent as *soror* with the consent of her husband Pedro Folch; she offered Sigena the annual rent from certain houses in Lleida, which she had received from her mother as her dowry.³⁹ These two receptions were formally arranged in the presence of the Prioress Ozenda without mention of the queen, who must have been absent when the documents were written. Sancha had probably become a *consoror* in 1187. She might have professed as full

³⁴ The date of her election is not known. Sancha de Abiego, the first prioress, appears from August 1190 in the texts (*ibid.*).

³⁵ *CH*, no. 931 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 11.

³⁶ *CH*, no. 896 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 9.

³⁷ Ubieto, *El Real Monasterio*, p. 64.

³⁸ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 42.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 45.

soror after Alfonso II's death in April 1196,⁴⁰ a possibility envisaged by the king in his testament of December 1194. He wanted Sancha to remain a widow and to keep her dowry *sive recipiat habitum religionis sive non*.⁴¹ Even if at some point Sancha received a full habit, she must have enjoyed a special status. She kept lands and money, lived regularly outside the house and made a will, among other things which ordinary *sorores* were not allowed to do.

Agustín Ubieto has collected a series of letters sent by Sancha to successive prioresses. They show, even more clearly than the above-mentioned contracts, the prominent role of the queen until her death in 1208. The main problem that they pose relates to their reliability. Ubieto took them from a manuscript compiled by Mariano de Pano before the dispersion of the archive in the Civil War. This handwritten version of a history of Sigüenza contained numerous transcriptions of documents. Some of them, including these letters, came from Fr Jaime Juan Moreno's recently rediscovered seventeenth-century work, which even Pano thought should be used with great care because the author had embellished the work to colour the history of the monastery.⁴² In spite of this negative opinion, Mariano de Pano used much of Prior Moreno's material. Although these letters might be forgeries, they can be used with caution, as their contents fit well into the peculiarities of the newly founded monastery and show no gross discrepancies with other well-tested sources.

The first of the six letters we are taking into account was sent to Sancha de Abiego on 25 October 1191.⁴³ Queen Sancha informed her that she had been asked repeatedly by María de Estopiñán, a noble widow, to be admitted to Sigüenza. The queen was convinced that María, as well as three other noble girls, fulfilled all the requirements, and so she ordered the prioress to admit the four of them. This imperative tone on a topic that touched on a matter of religious propriety and that should have been the responsibility of fully professed *sorores* and ultimately of the prioress was quite remarkable.⁴⁴ The letter showed equal authority over more

⁴⁰ Pope Celestine III referred to her in August 1196, a few months after her husband's death, as *sorori ordinis Sancti Iohannis in cenobio Xixenensi*, but it is unclear what he meant by the word *sorori*: *ibid.*, no. 24. Tradition made her a full *soror*, as Jerónimo Zurita stated at the end of the sixteenth century: 'la reina doña Sancha ... era monja profesa en él [Sigüenza]': *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. Angel Canellas López, vol. 1 (Zaragoza, 1998), p. 324. This became the standard view: for instance, Próspero de Bofarull y Mascaró, *Los condes de Barcelona vindicados y cronología y genealogía de los reyes de España considerados como soberanos independientes de su marca*, vol. 2 (Barcelona, 1836), p. 214.

⁴¹ Sánchez Casabón, no. 628 = Antoni Udina i Abelló, *Els testaments dels comtes de Barcelona i dels reis de la Corona d'Aragó: De Guifré Borrell a Joan II* (Barcelona, 2001), no. 15.

⁴² Ubieto, 'La documentación de Sigüenza', p. 25; and see above, p. 114, n. 5.

⁴³ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 10.

⁴⁴ 'Maria de Stopagna, viuda nobilis ... desiderat esse de nostra societate et flexis genibus iterum atque iterum et iteratis vicibus, flendo cum magna devotione, habitu nostra religionis humiliter me petit, quare suis precibus inclinata mitto ad vos cum tribus puellis ex

material questions. The queen informed the prioress that she was sending a Saracen, an expert on mill construction, who should be put to work according to plans already established. Finally, Sancha showed interest in the building of one of the towers of the monastery and pressed for its quick completion; she remarked that this architectural addition had aesthetic, not defensive, value.⁴⁵

The explicit reference to the building of the conventual compound, which included elements that might remind viewers of a fortress rather than of a religious house, as the very words of the letter suggested, showed that the construction of the monastic premises (fig. 5.1) was on a lavish scale. The mural paintings from the chapter house, some of which survived the destruction in August 1936 and are now at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona, confirm this. The pictorial series and the wooden ceiling of the room have been dated to just after 1210 by some scholars, who suggest that Sancha's eldest daughter Constanza, who travelled to Sicily as the betrothed of Frederick II in 1209 and whose interest in Sigena was also great,⁴⁶ presumably arranged for the decoration of the chapter house following Sicilian styles of a distinctive Byzantine and Muslim imprint. English artists who had gone to Sicily in the entourage of the English princess Joan, married to William II in 1174, and who had absorbed Byzantine forms there, established a school of painters which was evidently responsible for the Winchester Bible illuminations and for the Sigena frescoes as well; the wooden ceiling was the work of Aragonese Moorish artisans who reproduced Sicilian models with a strong local accent (fig. 5.2).

An alternative explanation would, on stylistic grounds, have the roof and the frescoes being made much earlier, c. 1090–1094.⁴⁷ If this hypothesis is accepted,

tribus nobilibus ortis, omnes admitte ad receptionem habitum et profesionem, cum iam nos sumus certe habent qualitatem requisitam secundum nostrum institutum.' Ibid., no. 10.

⁴⁵ 'Desidero vehementer ut turris vestra quam edificatis inter muros et menia monasterii sit citius facta, non pro custodia monialium nec pro clausura cum ipsemet (sic) moniales religiosa sint mura et turres nam virtus ipsarum est versus murus et nobilitas pectorum suorum sicut turres, sed ad prespectivam et bellum visum nam de longe videtur quasi propugnaculum et castrum bellicum cum in eo non sint arma offensiva nisi defensiva, prout sunt orationes nominalium et lacrimae.' Ibid., no. 10.

⁴⁶ Zurita, I, p. 328, gave the date of her departure; Damian J. Smith, *Innocent III and the Crown of Aragon* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 69–70. In April 1217 Constanza sent to Sigena important documents relating to her marriages. The monastery had become a secure depository for members of the royal house. Thus Constanza, away in Sicily, showed her fondness of and trust in the Aragonese Hospitaller house: CH, no. 1577 = Ubieta, *Documentos*, no. 80.

⁴⁷ The connection Sicily-Winchester-Sigena and the early thirteenth-century dating of the paintings, which contrasted with the much later dates previously proposed, were established by Otto Pächt, 'A Cycle of English Frescoes in Spain', *Burlington Magazine*, 103 (1961), and by Walter Oakeshott, *Sigena: Romanesque Paintings in Spain and the Artists of the Winchester Bible* (London, 1972), pp. 113–16, 142. This view was followed by Bernabé Cabañero Subiza, *La techumbre mudejar de la sala capitular del monasterio de Sijena*

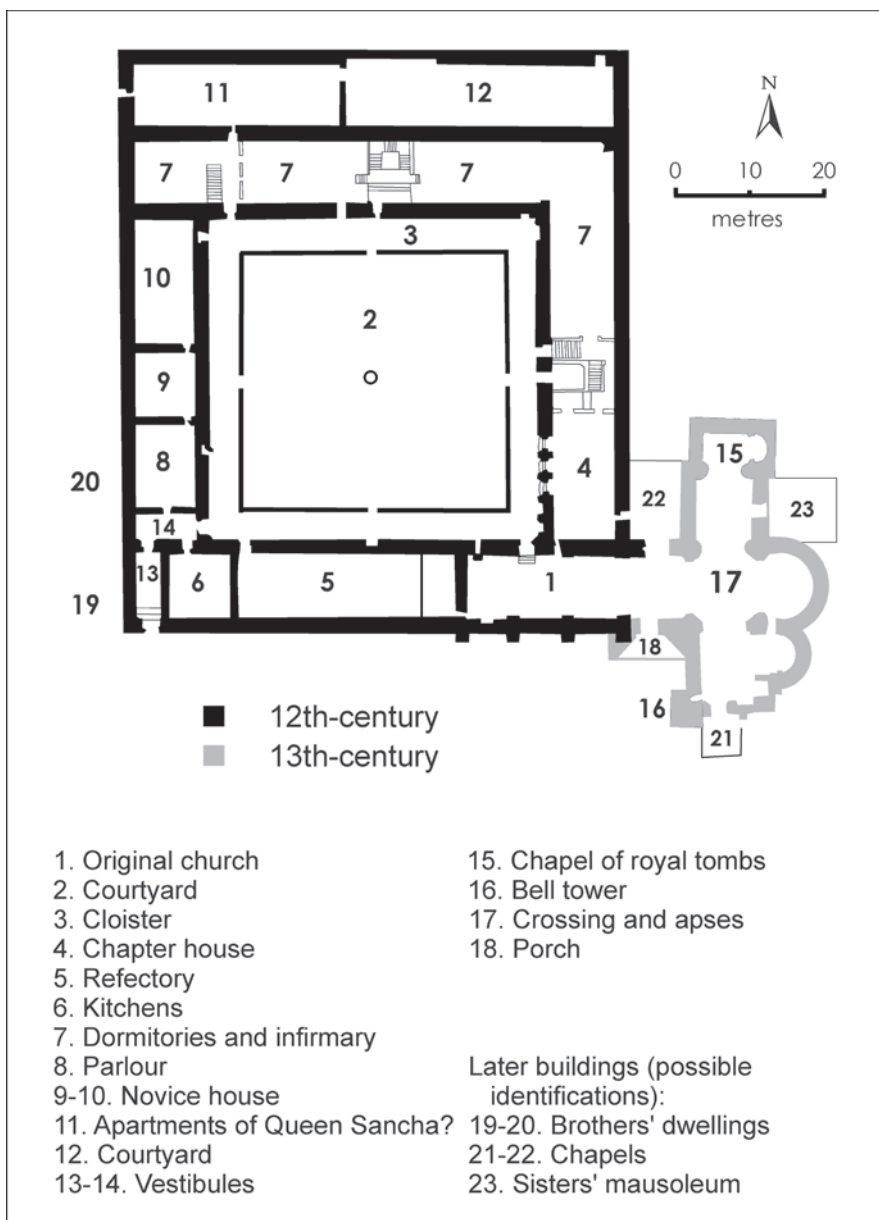


Fig. 5.1 Plan of Sigena monastery in the twelfth and early thirteenth century



Fig. 5.2 Sigena Chapter House before August 1936: Arab-style wooden ceiling and Byzantine frescoes

Queen Constanza would have had nothing to do with the embellishment of the chapter house, nor would Sicily be the direct origin of the artistic style; the ceiling would have been the work of Moorish artisans but with no Sicilian influence, and the painters would have probably come straight from England. The way in which this influence would have reached a deserted part of Aragon is unknown. It is evident that this cosmopolitan style could only be employed in a remote region through firm and generous monarchical patronage. Even if the immediate post-1210 chronology were favoured in relation to the splendid ornamentation of the chapter house, at the time of Queen Sancha's death in 1208 a significant part of the monastic buildings must have already been built.⁴⁸ A new foundation, yet to reach the peak of future donations, could not sustain so high a rhythm of expenditure. It was no

(*Huesca*) (Tarazona, 2000), pp. 32–6, 97–8, who linked to Queen Constanza the introduction of the foreign artistic influence into Aragon. K. F. Schuler, the art historian, who has studied the chapter house murals most thoroughly in recent times, dates the paintings to before 1195: *The Pictorial Programme*, p. 216. Catalan scholars have supported this dating: Eduard Carbonell i Esteller et al., *Guía arte románico* (Barcelona, 1998), pp. 134, 170–75. Neither they nor Schuler offer any explanation as to how Byzantine influence could have reached Sigena years before Constanza went to Sicily.

⁴⁸ Gardelles, 21 (church plan), 26.

wonder that the Castellan wished to escape from that financial whirlwind and in 1202 succeeded in persuading Pedro II to allow an economic disengagement of his Castellany from Sigena.⁴⁹

The expenses also seriously affected the main patron: the queen. Alfonso II had to rescue her as early as March 1193. He explicitly allowed Sancha, who was temporarily in possession of the Ciurana Mountains in Tarragona, to continue to exploit them, by leasing them out if she so wished, until her debts had been cancelled. There was no reference in the text to the origin of the queen's financial difficulties, but Sigena must have been their main cause. Once her debts were extinguished, possession of the mountains was to be transferred to Sigena for a period of two years, after which the area would revert to the Crown. Pedro, heir to the throne, also approved the grant, a clear sign of the king's wish to assure its observance after his death.⁵⁰

This text showed not only the severe financial strains on Sancha, but also her husband's continuing support of the convent, an attitude again revealed in the testament drawn up by the king in December 1194. In one clause he gave the Order the village of Ontiñena, bordering Sigena on its eastern side, together with all that the king held in Alcubierre after the death of Lupo de Foz.⁵¹ Other documents also demonstrated the king's favours to Sigena. In January 1193 he made the grant of a Saracen with his family and possessions plus, separately, 12 pitchers of oil from Benifallet to be sent to the convent every year. Both royal donations were given to Sancha, *dominatrici, et vestro monasterio*, with no reference to the prioress or to any other dignity of the monastery.⁵² In the king's eyes it was clear that Sigena was Sancha's work and that she had supreme authority over it. The Hospital's higher authorities in Aragon and Catalunya also accepted that the monastery was controlled by the queen. In January 1198 the Castellan, with the counsel of the Commanders of Amposta, Lleida, Barbastro and Sigena, gave Ferrer de Santa Lecina and his brother an estate in Alcolea and Cascallén; the annual money rent would be handed to the monastery. Apart from Sancha, no other dignitary of the convent subscribed the document; Jimeno, *preceptor Sexene*, did so, but apparently as part of the Castellan's council rather than as a representative of the monastic house.⁵³

The second letter from Sancha was sent to Beatriz de Cabrera, the third prioress, on 5 September 1193. Pope Celestine III had approved the foundation of the house

⁴⁹ CH, no. 1155 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 33.

⁵⁰ Ibid., no. 15 = Sánchez Casabón, no. 589; the summaries made by both editors are incorrect.

⁵¹ CH, no. 968 (partial transcription of the testament) = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 20 (partial transcription of the testament) = Sánchez Casabón, no. 628 (Sigena clause at p. 812).

⁵² CH, no. 940 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 12 = Sánchez Casabón, no. 583; the second document is in Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 13.

⁵³ CH, no. 1009 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 27.

in June of that year. Significantly, the bull was sent to Sancha not to the convent. The queen redirected it to the community of the monastery, which was repeatedly referred to as *noster*, a term that was meant to express not just an honorific patronage but also a deep sense of proprietorship and a firm direction.⁵⁴ Three years later, in October 1196, Sancha dealt with an internal problem. Lay persons were attending choir sessions and interfering with religious services. The queen strictly forbade them to be present unless they were *nobilissimae* or from a royal family, in which case those persons would sit beside the prioress, among them the royal infanta Constanza who was specifically mentioned by her mother Sancha.⁵⁵ The *in crescendo* wording of the command – *rogamus et ... obsecramus et ... mandamus stricte* – strongly reflected the queen's authority in matters of internal religious discipline. Sancha's injunction did not solve all the problems, because in December 1198 she had to insist on this point. No lay person was to be admitted in the choir, unless she or he belonged to the royal family, in which case she or he would be placed behind the prioress. If the king and the queen were present, they would be seated at her side with the princes and princesses at the back. If any *soror* were part of the royal family, she would have the right to sit just behind the prioress's stall. This punctilious precision shows the ceremonial strictness of everyday life in a monastery where most of its members were of noble stock, and it also reveals the problems that arose on this account; the queen tried to put an end to the *novissima contentio inter vos orta super sedendo et succedendo*.⁵⁶

The letter sent on 1 April 1203 to the Prioress Ozenda de Lizana showed that, although Sancha was as a *soror* subservient to the head of the convent and had to ask permission to hand orchards and houses of her own to a new religious foundation in the city of Huesca, she nonetheless had the power to introduce new members to the monastery and to judge the spiritual qualities of the candidates.⁵⁷ As late as April 1208, six months before her death, Sancha seemed to be much in control of affairs. She was regarded by the senior officers of the Order as the main authority relating to Sigena, and so the Master of the Hospital sent her the privilege of 1 October 1207; Sancha informed the prioress of its reception half a year later. At that time she was still concerned with work on the fabric of the church (fig. 5.3), announcing that a mason would go to Sigena to collaborate on the construction of that building. She was probably referring to the extension of the original edifice which started by adding a north transept, at the north end of which the royal pantheon was located.⁵⁸ Sancha was also planning to be present at the feast of the dedication of the monastic

⁵⁴ Ibid., no. 18.

⁵⁵ Ibid., no. 25. The text is not totally reliable.

⁵⁶ Ibid., no. 30.

⁵⁷ 'sorores omnes ex parte mea comendare curetis ducam nonnullas domnas ad recipiendum habitum nam ardent fervore nostre religionis': *ibid.*, no. 37.

⁵⁸ Gardelles, 21 (church plan), 26.



Fig. 5.3 Sigüenza: the south doorway of the church, demonstrating the massive scale of the architecture

church together with King Pedro II's wife María and with her own daughter Constanza, who had become Queen of Sicily.⁵⁹

Alfonso II died on 25 April 1196. By August Sancha may have become a fully professed *soror* of the convent. At that date her status as *soror* was recognized by Pope Celestine III when he assured his protection to the queen's person and properties, specially to those granted by her husband who had recently died. If Sancha had gone beyond her previous condition of *consoror*, she had then formally become a full member of the convent and not just a lay associate.⁶⁰ Although she kept almost total independence of action, a significant part of her activities was ultimately related to Sigüenza. On 1 June 1202 she received a Saracen under her protection; the annual rent of 13 pounds of wax that reflected the submission would be paid to the convent.⁶¹ On another occasion she decreed the transfer to the

⁵⁹ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 49.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 24 (7 August 1196). The pope addressed Sancha as 'regine Aragonum, ac sorori ordinis Sancti Iohannis in cenobio Xixenensi': above, p. 124, n. 40. The only extant copy of the pope's document comes from Mariano de Pano's transcription of a monastic parchment lost since 1936.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, no. 34.



Fig. 5.4 Sigena: tombs of Queen Sancha of Aragon and her son King Pedro II

monastery after her death of the personal bonds that tied a Jew and his family to her. In January 1209, after the queen's decease, the new link was given legal form in a document.⁶² This was one of the first instances of the convent acting on its own after the overpowering presence of the founder had disappeared. Ozenda de Lizana, the prioress, was advised by three *sorores* and four *fratres*. The convent was no longer a community whose voice was unheard, and some of its members, both women and men, emerged with specific responsibilities: subprioress, sacristan, deputy commander, chaplain and even a *procurator vinearum*. These officers must have existed before, but there had been no place for them in earlier charters as the queen had absorbed all attention.

Sancha's testament of 1208 reflected the queen's lifelong commitment to Sigena. She ordered her corpse to be buried in the monastic chapel of San Pedro in the north transept, which had just been added to the old church (fig. 5.4). Movables, properties and dependants were given to the convent.⁶³ Sancha pressed her son, King Pedro II,

⁶² Ibid., no. 53.

⁶³ CH, no. 1277 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 48. Both editors give only the summary of the text found in a sixteenth-century inventory. The testament was probably lost in 1936.

to ratify the clauses of her will. On 27 October 1208 he did so.⁶⁴ He confirmed all the grants made by Alfonso II to his wife or to Sigena, as well as those that he himself might make in future. He offered royal protection to properties and dependants of both the queen and the convent. He appointed the Castellan as executor of Sancha's will. Two other points made reference to the queen's debts. Pedro II would follow his mother's indications as to paying them off. Special mention was made of the rents of the Ciurana Mountains which Alfonso II had temporarily given to his wife before 1193.⁶⁵ The Castellan of Amposta would control them until 2000 *aurei* had been paid to the monastery, and another 1500 to those persons whom Sancha had determined. The king would recover the rents if he paid the total quantity to the Castellan immediately after his mother's death. That considerable sum of money was probably calculated with an eye to Sancha's debts, or at least to part of them, taking also into account the final generous grant to Sigena, the equivalent of two years' rents as stipulated in the accord of 1193.

A document of 6 November 1208, the reliability of which may be questioned and which is only known through summaries, showed the queen as still alive.⁶⁶ Nine days later, Pedro II made a grant of land in Pina to Ferrer de Santa Lecina in recognition of the many services he had made the queen in the past.⁶⁷ The wording implies that she was already dead. Besides, the donation was made at Sigena, where the king had probably gone to attend his mother's funeral. The obituary of Sigena, only known through references in Prior Moreno, fixed the day of Sancha's death to 9 November, a date which was commemorated until modern times.⁶⁸

Other members of the royal family shared a strong attachment to Sigena, a link that must have been stimulated by the queen. We have already dealt with King Alfonso's favours; nevertheless he himself chose the Cistercian house of Poblet for his burial and gave it his royal crown.⁶⁹ Alfonso was the first monarch to be interred in the new Cistercian Abbey of Poblet, thus breaking the tradition of burials in the monastery of Ripoll. He was conscious of the novelty and tried to soften possible grudges by testamentary donations to that old Pyrenean house *in recompensationem sepulture mee*. Pedro II showed a similarly favourable attitude to Sigena. His most significant step was his early decision to be buried at the monastery,⁷⁰ although his wishes could not be followed immediately on his death, in spite of the assumption

⁶⁴ CH, no. 1315 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 50.

⁶⁵ Above, pp. 128, n. 50.

⁶⁶ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 51 (summary).

⁶⁷ Ibid., no. 52. Ferrer de Santa Lecina's attachment to the house grew to the point of his becoming a donat and choosing burial at Sigena in 1213: *ibid.*, no. 65.

⁶⁸ M. de Pano, *La Santa Reina Doña Sancha*, p. 108.

⁶⁹ 'Dimitto siquidem corpus meum ... ad sepeliendum in monasterio Populeti. Dono etiam atque concedo eidem monasterio imperpetuum regiam coronam meam': will of December 1194 in Sánchez Casabón, no. 628.

⁷⁰ CH, no. 987 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 23 (only summary and date).

of some later chronicles.⁷¹ After the king's tragic end at Muret in 1213, his body was interred in the Hospitaller house in Toulouse. In 1217 Pope Honorius III gave permission for his remains and for those of some followers who had been Hospitaller *oblatis* to be transferred to Sigena following young King Jaime I's request, and he expressly condemned any possible obstacles to this transfer on account of Pedro II's debts which could be honoured by his son.⁷²

Three of the daughters of the royal couple had contacts of diverse intensity with the house. Dulce must have been still a girl when she professed at the moment of the foundation of the monastery probably as a *puella* and not as a full *soror*. She died early, in February 1189, and was buried there.⁷³ In a codicil written days before his death, Alfonso II offered his eldest daughter to Sigena; she would enter the house after his death with a dowry of 6000 *solidi*.⁷⁴ It has been traditionally assumed that the king's clause referred to Constanza, who was mentioned as his first daughter in the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium*.⁷⁵ Queen Sancha's letter of October 1196, which instructed the community of Sigena to console Constanza, presumably on account of her father's death, spoke of her as Queen of Hungary. She had probably been betrothed to Emeric of Hungary by that date, and this fact clearly ran contrary to her father's alleged decision expressed six months before to devote her to Sigena, unless the promise of marriage had taken place between the end of April 1196 and October of that year, which seems very unlikely. As a consequence the idea that Constanza professed in Sigena following her father's wishes must be abandoned. The king had probably not had Constanza in mind when he had the codicil composed, although there is no way to demonstrate this point.⁷⁶ Constanza's visit to

⁷¹ The information provided by the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium*, ed. Louis Barrau-Dihigo and Jaume Massó Torrents (Barcelona, 1925), seemed to imply that the king was buried at Sigena straight away: pp. 54 (Latin final version), 141 (Catalan). Zurita, 1, p. 349, took this view.

⁷² CH, no. 1552 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 79.

⁷³ Ricardo del Arco, *Sepulcros de la casa real de Aragón* (Madrid, 1945), pp. 176–7.

⁷⁴ Sánchez Casabón, no. 656 = Udina no. 16 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 22 (partial transcription).

⁷⁵ When referring to the king's daughters, the three chronological versions of the *Gesta* dealt first with Constanza and then with Leonor, although only the most modern text, written at the beginning of the fourteenth century, stated the order without doubt: 'Prima filiarum vocata Constantia ... secunda filia vocata fuit Elionor': pp. 15 (first Latin version), 138 (Catalan), 50 (second Latin version).

⁷⁶ A possible way out of this conundrum would be to consider that the only known version of Alfonso II's codicil, which is kept among the parchments of the monastery of Poblet and not in the royal register, is a faulty copy; the scribe would have written *filiam maiorem* instead of *filiam Alionorem*. Another copy of the codicil dated May 1196 used exactly the same terms: Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 17. The text is a copy, but there are indications that it is a reliable transcription. The other possibility is to relate *filiam maiorem* to one of the other two remaining daughters, presumably Leonor, but it is difficult to understand why the king did not consider Constanza in his calculations, unless he was ruling her out on

Sigena did not last long, because in about 1198 she must have travelled to Hungary. The widow queen returned to Aragon after her husband's death in 1204; in 1208 she was already betrothed to Frederick II of Sicily. One papal source stated that the engagement was already arranged in 1204 but either this is spurious or the pope confused Constanza with her sister Sancha.⁷⁷ Constanza's later interest in Sigena showed a close relationship with the house, but her links to it probably never went beyond a deep affection inherited from her mother.

Some authors think that Constanza's sister Leonor was buried in Sigena, but that is doubtful. The information comes again from Prior Moreno, who is *poco verídico*, as Ricardo del Arco reminded us.⁷⁸ Mariano de Pano's report to the Royal Academy on the opening of the Sigena tombs in October 1883 expressed doubts about the theory that the two small coffins which were found contained the bodies of Leonor and Dulce.⁷⁹ At some point Leonor must have been offered to the monastery. Her brother, Pedro II, gave to Sigena in 1212 the village of Lanaja in exchange and compensation for several donations made to the house by himself and his parents which had not been delivered so far. Among them was the sum of 6000 *solidi* which Pedro II had promised to pay Sigena when some years earlier he had taken Leonor out to marry the Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI.⁸⁰ It is reasonable to suppose that this was the dowry which should have been paid when Leonor entered the house as a novice. The sum was the same as that offered by Alfonso II in his codicil, and some authors have used this fact as proof that Leonor was the *filiam maiorem* mentioned in that text,⁸¹ but the same amount of money could have been put forward for two or more other daughters. Unfortunately no information survives on Dulce's dowry. It is probable that she entered the convent as a *puella* and that her dowry was paid; if so,

account of her betrothal to the King of Hungary. An alternative explanation would be to regard Queen Sancha's letter of October 1196 as a straight forgery; the text comes from Prior Moreno's chronicle and so this possibility cannot be dismissed. That would nonetheless mean delaying Constanza's betrothal for some years. This late dating is quite improbable, as the Bishop of Huesca's journey to Hungary, which has been traditionally related to marriage negotiations, took place in the early 1190s. With the present knowledge of the sources it is not possible to go much further.

⁷⁷ The King of Hungary was dead by October 1204: Aurell, p. 419; Smith, p. 30.

⁷⁸ Del Arco, p. 176. Prior Moreno based his assumption on the information reassembled by an ancient chronicle: 'Fuit sepulta Ileonor comitissa in capella Beati Petri, prope Dulciam sororem nostri Hospitalis'.

⁷⁹ Mariano de Pano y Ruata, 'Acto de apertura y reconocimiento de los sepulcros reales del monasterio de Sijena', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 11 (1887). His argument is not conclusive, since the original coffins might have been opened earlier and the remains assembled into smaller boxes.

⁸⁰ 'Et illorum sex milium solidorum que nos dare tenebamur eidem monasterio et promisimus tunc temporis quando de monasterio illo traximus dompnam Alionorem, karissimam sororem nostram comitissam Tolose': Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 60.

⁸¹ Aurell, p. 494.

since she was the only daughter who professed at Sigena, that might provide some clues as to which of her two sisters was sent to the cloister by Alfonso II.

Sigena was regarded as a royal burial site, although very soon the abbeys of Poblet and Santes Creus began to fill that purpose. The monarchy used the monastic complex in other different ways. Sigena's central location made the house an ideal place for storing documents and it served as a de facto royal archive before Jaime II reformed the system of keeping records at the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁸² Pedro II deemed Sigena the most suitable place to keep the coronation insignias he had worn when he was crowned at Rome by Pope Innocent III in 1204; as the mantle, dalmatic, crown, mitre, sceptre and globe were the symbolic signs of royal power, their deposit at Sigena showed the deep attachment of the king to the convent.⁸³ On 1 June 1218 the Prioress Ozenda de Lizana guaranteed Jaime I that she would hand over to him all these items when he wished to be crowned.⁸⁴ Sigena was also renowned for its relics; some of them were coveted by later kings, such as Hermenegild's head. This became a symbol for the Catholic monarchy of the Habsburgs and Philip II persuaded the *sorores* to part with it at the time of the millenary of the saint's death in 1586. The relic had apparently been given by Queen Sancha to Sigena, or at least that is what the sisters thought when they agreed to the king's petition.⁸⁵

A Rule of its Own

When finally in March 1188 Queen Sancha transferred to the Castellan the estate of Codogn in compensation for the villages previously given by the Order to serve as a territorial base for the new house at Sigena, she clearly stated the legal framework that would regulate the foundation. She mentioned the Rule of the Hospital and the additions to the Rule of Saint Augustine which she had ordered to be written and which were to become the Rule of Sigena.⁸⁶ The fundamental rules governing the Order as a whole were clearly laid down by Master Raymond de Puy before 1154;

⁸² Ubieto, 'La documentación de Sigena', 21–3.

⁸³ Rafael Conde y Delgado de Molina, 'Las insignias de coronación de Pedro I-II "el Católico" depositadas en el monasterio de Sijena', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 28 (1998).

⁸⁴ Archivo de la Corona de Aragón [ACA], Cancillería Real [CR], Pergaminos, Jaime I, carp. 68, no. 108 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 84 (partial transcription).

⁸⁵ 'con ser la cosa que más sentimiento nos podía dar, por perder la prenda más cara que en esta Casa dexó la Reyna doña Sancha fundadora della': Juan Manuel del Estal, 'Culto de Felipe II a San Hermenegildo', *La ciudad de Dios*, 174 (1961).

⁸⁶ 'ibi vivant ... sub regula sacratissimi Hospitalis, simul cum additamentis regule, quas [que] ego illi addidi scilicet sancti Augustini': Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 6; English translation in Schuler, p. 236.

at least eight of its 19 clauses were Augustinian in origin.⁸⁷ The Rule of the Hospital and that of Saint Augustine, which Queen Sancha took as another legislative starting point, were clearly insufficient for a female convent in need of minute regulations for its daily life rather than of spiritual advice or norms for caring for the sick. Augustine of Hippo's precepts for nuns formed part of two texts, the *Obiurgatio* and the *Regularis Informatio*, which frequently appeared as components of a single work, the so-called Rule of Saint Augustine.⁸⁸ The *Obiurgatio* or *Reprimand* is, as its very name suggests, a critical consideration of the behaviour of a community of nuns who had revolted against their superior. The second section dealt more specifically with life in the convent, but in a general way which restricted it to the level of an ideal programme, common to all communities but clearly not suitable as a practical code for a specific monastery.

The short Rule of the Order of Saint John, composed in the time of Raymond de Puy, contained only 19 articles. It focused on disciplinary aspects, to which seven clauses were devoted, and on points relating to hospitaller activities, the collection of alms above all; four articles were centred on this theme.⁸⁹ Liturgical aspects were treated only in articles 3 and 14, the first dealing with the *servise des iglises* in general terms and the second with the office for the dead. Bearing in mind that the community of Sigena was not primarily destined to engage in charitable pursuits, but rather in elaborate prayer in the canonical hours, Raymond de Puy's norms were of limited use. Significantly the additions announced by Queen Sancha, that is the Rule of Sigena, mentioned the Hospitaller Rule only twice. Article 24 stated that persistent offenders would be judged according to the latter set of regulations, referring to disciplinary clauses that could be applied in a contemplative house.⁹⁰ Article 59 did not mention Raymond's precepts directly but, when indicating that *sorores* should use for their dress the same materials as Hospitaller *fratres*, it was surely referring to common usage as well as to article 8 of Raymond de Puy's Rule.⁹¹

The Rule of Sigena was a very descriptive text in 60 articles, much longer than the Rule of the Order or that of Saint Augustine.⁹² The practical character of this

⁸⁷ Luttrell – Nicholson, Chapter 1, p. 30.

⁸⁸ The best modern edition is in Luc Verheijen, *La Règle de Saint Augustin*, 1: *Tradition manuscrite* (Paris, 1967), pp. 49–66.

⁸⁹ The best known edition of the Rule is in *CH*, no. 70.

⁹⁰ Durán Gudiol, 175 (art. XXIV: *De rebus inventis*) = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8.

⁹¹ Durán Gudiol, 191 (art. LIX: *De vestibus*) = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8.

⁹² The Rule of Sigena is known through a thirteenth-century copy kept at the Provincial Archive of Huesca (APH, S-1/9). Fr. Marco Antonio Varón edited it in the eighteenth century with numerous errors: *Historia*, 2 (Pamplona, 1776), pp. i–xlvi; Delaville le Roulx followed him and so his text is not trustworthy: *CH*, no. 859. Antonio Durán Gudiol transcribed the Rule in 1960 from the thirteenth-century copy (above, p. 119, n. 23); it is the best edition, although a full study of the text is still lacking. There is also a late-medieval manuscript which contains a translation of the Rule into Aragonese: *Biblioteca de Catalunya: Catàleg del Museo del Llibre Frederic Marès*, ed. Anscari Mundó (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 9–10.

code, which aimed at planning the daily life in the convent with extreme detail and at regulating any foreseeable situation, accounted for its length. There were no high-toned spiritual considerations, but down-to-earth clauses which tried to cover all contingencies with a remarkable sense of *horror vacui*. Sigena was a new experience from the point of view of a male institution bound to non-contemplative activities. There were no monastic precedents of this sort within the Order and the *sorores*, many of them of noble stock, had no previous religious training and so they had to be instructed what to do at each precise moment. It was highly significant that the queen had to rely on an outsider, the Bishop of Huesca, to write the additions; probably there was no Aragonese Hospitaller competent to compose rules for a type of life so different from the charitable vocation of the Order.

The queen's choice fell on Ricardo, Bishop of Huesca from the early months of 1187, probably because of his knowledge of monastic life. He was archdeacon of that see at the time of his episcopal election, but he might have been Catalan and a former monk of Poblet; the perfect information about minute details of activities within the cloister, which most of the clauses of the Rule of Sigena reveal, supports this view.⁹³ Furthermore, Ricardo was in close contact with the royal court, which was stationed in Huesca at different times during 1187 and 1188.⁹⁴ His later journey to Hungary in 1190–91 is difficult to explain, unless he was commissioned by King Alfonso II and Queen Sancha to negotiate the marriage of the Infanta Constanza, which probably took place at the end of the decade.⁹⁵

The clauses of the Rule of Sigena were divisible into five unequal blocks according to their object. The first group dealt with the regulation of daily life in the convent and covered over two thirds of the Rule, exactly 45 clauses. The planning followed in detail the routine on Sundays; the different arrangements for weekdays were referred to in three final entries.⁹⁶ The full description of the liturgical rituals of the canonical hours was the main thread, although aspects of the daily life of the *sorores* were inserted at the appropriate time of the day. Titles are not always a sure guideline to contents, because they do not always mention the different themes dealt with in a specific point. Clause 21, *Qua hora debeant balneari*, dealt with the substitution of *sorores* in the functions they were supposed to undertake in case they could not perform them.⁹⁷ Clause 24 was far more devoted to disciplinary questions than to *De rebus inventis* announced in its title.⁹⁸

The treatment of matins and prime and of particulars of life at midnight and early morning are followed in the text of the Rule by the daily chapter, whose proceedings were clearly fixed. A reading, the *Benedicite* canticle and a sermon, to be delivered

⁹³ Durán Gudiol, pp. 2–3.

⁹⁴ J. Caruana, 'Itinerario de Alfonso II de Aragón', *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón*, 7 (1962), 160–77; Smith, p. 173.

⁹⁵ Durán Gudiol, p. 4.

⁹⁶ Clauses XLIII–XLV: *ibid.*, 184–5 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 33–4.

⁹⁷ Durán Gudiol, p. 173 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, p. 23.

⁹⁸ Durán Gudiol, pp. 174–5 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 24–5.

in the vernacular if the prioress or her chosen replacement could not preach in Latin, would give way to a discussion of matters touching the community and to disciplinary affairs and punishments.⁹⁹ Terce, procession, mass and sext,¹⁰⁰ and late in the day nones, vespers, evening meal, compline and retreat to the dormitory were dealt with.¹⁰¹ The various details were certainly not new. They were common to most monastic communities. Thus their main interest does not lie in their novelty, but in the dry ritualistic flavour that radiates from them. There was no mention whatsoever of any spiritual impulse, not even a single expression of religious sentiment detached from practicalities. Conventual life was the strict observance of the rite experienced in the liturgy and in communal gatherings such as meals. No wonder then that whole clauses were dedicated to those who broke these formal rules in one way or another, such as *sorores* who arrived late to matins, or left the choir without permission or simply made mistakes in reciting the psalms.¹⁰² The ritual was most clearly expressed in the way the main meal should proceed, to which the longest point in the Rule was devoted.¹⁰³ Every step was fixed from the entry into the refectory, the ceremonial washing of the prioress's hands and the benediction at the start of the meal to the end of the reading and the final prayer. Every possible contingency was covered, especially where it involved breaking the uniformity of behaviour. Each monastic official had her duties in the refectory neatly determined.¹⁰⁴

The other four thematic blocks were contained in the last 15 clauses of the Sigena Rule. Four points were devoted to the care and treatment of sick *sorores*, with special reference to their spiritual well-being.¹⁰⁵ Being in the infirmary, they could not join the continuous ritual celebration, which was the established way to perfection for individuals within the community, but their participation in the canonical hours was guaranteed through two *sorores* reading them the divine office.¹⁰⁶ These clauses evidently referred to sick members of the community and

⁹⁹ Chapter and reconciliation are treated in clauses XXII–XXV: Durán Gudiol, pp. 173–5 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 23–5.

¹⁰⁰ Clauses XXVI–XXX: Durán Gudiol, pp. 175–7 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 25–6.

¹⁰¹ Clauses XXXII, XXXV–XLI: Durán Gudiol, pp. 179–83 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 29, 30–33.

¹⁰² Clause IX, 'De sororibus que non adsunt principio matutini'; Clause X, 'Nulla sine licentia exeat chorum'; Clause XIII, 'De his que errant in dicendis psalmis et agit de tribus nocturnis': Durán Gudiol, pp. 170–71 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 20–22.

¹⁰³ Clause XXXI, 'De ingressu refectorii': Durán Gudiol, pp. 177–9 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 27–8.

¹⁰⁴ Clause XXXIV, 'Ad quas pertinet dare necessaria in refectorio': Durán Gudiol, p. 180 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 29–30.

¹⁰⁵ Clauses XLVI–XLIX: Durán Gudiol, pp. 185–6 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 35–6.

¹⁰⁶ Clause XLVIII, 'Quando autem infirmis hore diei dicantur': Durán Gudiol, pp. 186 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 35–6.

never to a hospitaller activity. There was no trace of the original vocation of the Order. The following section made indications about those *sorores* who were on the verge of death or who had already died, insisting on the ritual to be followed and contemplating the possibility of death outside the monastery, a clear sign that strict enclosure was not intended even in the Rule.¹⁰⁷ The final block of clauses regulated the appearance of the *dominae* with special provisions about their hair and clothes.¹⁰⁸ Before these last three clauses, two entries touched on a basic theme: the election of the prioress and her functions. The communal chapter would choose three *dominae* who themselves would appoint another five on whom would rest the responsibility for electing a new prioress. The election would require the Castellan of Amposta's assent to become valid, as the Prior of Saint-Gilles had stated in 1187.¹⁰⁹ The head of the convent was responsible for appointing the main officers of the house as well as the clerics serving its church; she also had direct jurisdiction over those working in the monastic premises.¹¹⁰

The description of how life should be conducted at Sigena cannot be taken as a straight narrative of events taking place within the house. There must have been some divergence between code and reality, but its Rule showed with great accuracy how this monastery was conceived, how different it was from other, male units of the Order, and how in many aspects it resembled traditional Benedictine centres. All this and other peculiarities made the relationship with the Hospitaller structure in Aragon and Catalonia difficult. The similarities with most old-type monastic communities did not extend to the double structure of *sorores* and *fratres* with its predominance of the female element, which was a remarkable feature of Sigena.

A Double Monastery? *Sorores* and *Fratres*

When in 1187 the Prior of Saint-Giles and Castellan of Amposta Ermengol de Aspa fixed the main lines on which the new foundation should develop, he clearly stated that the monastery would be composed of *fratres* and *sorores*, both under the rule of a prioress.¹¹¹ Sigena had been a Hospitaller commandery since 1157 and presumably the members of the Order living in it were absorbed by the new house when it came to be founded, but they did not stand on equal terms with the female community; rather they were clearly subjected to it as an appendix which was not justified in its own right but in its service to the *sorores* in those functions which could only be

¹⁰⁷ Clauses L–LV: Durán Gudiol, pp. 186–90 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 36–40.

¹⁰⁸ Clauses LVIII–LX: Durán Gudiol, p. 191 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, p. 40.

¹⁰⁹ Clause LVI, 'De electione priorisse': Durán Gudiol, pp. 190–91 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, p. 40. For the requirement of the Castellan's approval, above, p. 120 n. 25.

¹¹⁰ Clause LVII, 'De officio priorisse': Durán Gudiol, p. 191 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, p. 40.

¹¹¹ Above, pp. 119–20.

performed by men, such as sacramental religious celebrations and the management of the conventual estates. That is why Sigena was not technically a double monastery in the sense that men and women strove separately and roughly on equal terms for their spiritual perfection through contemplation.¹¹² From the start the men were organized as a parallel and subordinate monastic body that operated by itself under the jurisdiction of the prioress. The Rule of Sigena barely mentioned them, because they were just a subsidiary group that made possible the contemplative life of the Hospitaller nuns. Only when certain rites required the presence of men, as in the celebration of mass, were members of the male community mentioned. The daily mass obviously necessitated a priest. He was to be assisted by a dean, a subdean and other clerics,¹¹³ but a chaplain also participated in matins, the asperges and the procession prior to the mass.¹¹⁴ These clerics were all to be chosen by the prioress.¹¹⁵

The information about the male community was richer in the day-to-day documents produced by the monastery before c. 1210 than in the Rule of the house. The office of commander did not disappear; six *fratres* held the post of *preceptor* or *comendador* in those years.¹¹⁶ Although they shared that title with Hospitaller commanders elsewhere, these officers had lost most of the authority they had previously enjoyed. They were under the jurisdiction of the prioress, who elected them with the consent of the Castellan. They did not attend the Castellan's chapter on their own; if they were present at it, it was only as members of the prioress's retinue. She was the representative of Sigena in the higher councils of the Order.¹¹⁷

Other local dignitaries, two chaplains and a subcommander, were mentioned in the texts.¹¹⁸ The management of the monastic domains by *fratres* was attested by the

¹¹² Some scholars have regarded Sigena as a double monastery: see María Luisa Ledesma Rubio, *Templarios y Hospitalarios en el Reino de Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1982), pp. 137–8; Agustín Ubieto Arteta, *El monasterio dúplice de Sigena*, 2nd edn (Huesca, 1990); Juan Fernando Utrilla Utrilla, 'El Real Monasterio de Sijena en la Edad Media', in Sesma ed., p. 1.

¹¹³ Clause XXIX, 'De missa celebranda': Durán Gudiol, p. 176 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ Clauses VIII, 'De principio matutini diei', XXVII, 'De aqua benedicta', and XXVIII, 'De processione facienda': Durán Gudiol, pp. 170, 175–6 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, pp. 20, 25, 26.

¹¹⁵ Clause LVII, 'De officio priorisse': Durán Gudiol, p. 191 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 8, p. 40.

¹¹⁶ Lupo de Fillera, from August 1190 until June 1193; Guillermo de Besons in April 1194; Jimeno in January 1198; Berenguer de Albadell in 1199; Martín de Aivar, from April 1203 until November 1207; Pedro in April 1210: *CH*, nos 896, 931, 1274, 1343 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, nos 9, 11, 16, 19, 27, 31, 36, 41–2, 47, 58.

¹¹⁷ *CH*, no. 835 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 5.

¹¹⁸ Juan was mentioned as chaplain from June 1093 until 1099; Fortún appeared for the first time in January 1209: *ibid.*, nos 16, 19, 31, 53. Pedro was subcommander in February and March 1206, January 1209 and April 1210: *ibid.*, nos 40, 42, 53, 57.

allusion to Fr Domingo, *procurator vinearum*, in a grant of January 1209.¹¹⁹ Other *fratres* who held no title or office were referred to as well.¹²⁰ The male community must have received privileges from the queen, because the pope confirmed them in October 1195.¹²¹ The papal bull was addressed *priori et fratribus Hospitalis de Sexena*, the only mention of a prior in the early years of the monastery. In the mid thirteenth century the prior was for some decades the highest dignity of the male convent, although the term soon vanished. There was no early reference to another important conventual official, the chamberlain or *clavero*, well attested later on. While it is not possible to calculate the number of *fratres* in the monastery, it is reasonable to suppose that they would have been in the range of ten to 15 at the most. The documents mentioned only the upper stratum of *fratres*; global numbers are difficult to reach from such insufficient information, but this is a problem common to most commanderies of the Hospitallers and of the other military orders.

An estimate of the global number of *sorores* is equally difficult to establish for the same reasons. The information provided by Fr Ramón de Huesca about 13 women professing in April 1188 can be accepted only with caution. We do not know if it referred to real entries or whether the historian simply fell back on the traditional number for setting up a religious house, but it is the only precise numerical reference for the early years.¹²² In May 1207 Innocent III fixed at a minimum of 30 the number of sisters, but he kept open the possibility of a larger quota if the convent could sustain it.¹²³ A few months later the Castellan and Sancha also agreed that number, but as a maximum.¹²⁴ We do not know if the pope had received precise reports on this point or was just putting forward standard calculations applicable to any monastery. Anyway, it is not possible to establish the actual numbers from reliable sources. The information available concentrates on high dignitaries and officials, but it is almost impossible to get further down the scale; a few glimpses showing the entry of *puellae* and *sorores* is the most that we can achieve. The Rule of Sigena described in detail the monastic dignities and offices, but again it must be remembered that the regulations designed an ideal set-up that cannot be taken for the real structure of the convent. The organization must initially have been simple probably becoming more elaborate as time passed, but in the absence of documentary evidence the numbers perhaps stood in the region of the minimum of 30 suggested by Pope Innocent III.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., no. 53.

¹²⁰ Three in June 1193, and one in April 1194, November 1196, 1199, January 1209 and April 1210: *ibid.*, nos 16, 19, 26, 31, 53, 57.

¹²¹ *CH*, no. 978 = Paul Kehr, *Papsturkunden in Spanien. Vorarbeiten zur Hispania Pontificia*, 2: *Navarra und Aragon* (Berlin, 1928), no. 215 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 21.

¹²² Above, p. 122, n. 29.

¹²³ 'Ecclesia vero in suo statu manente, tricenarius canonicarum numerus non possit minui, sed augeri si ad plurium sustentationem facultates eius contigerit aumentari': *ibid.*, no. 43 = *CH*, no. 1261 (summary).

¹²⁴ Below, p. 147, n. 148.

The basic division within the convent was between adult women who had made a full profession and girls who had mostly been presented to the monastery by their parents and were then educated in monastic practices until they were old enough to profess. The entry of children implied a lengthy training; their number was so great that several dignitaries cared for their instruction and well-being. The Rule mentioned *magistre puellarum*, *custodes puellarum* and a *magistra prior puellarum*, the *soror* ultimately responsible for that section of the convent. Although none of them was mentioned in the documents before 1210, there is no doubt that these offices must have been established at an early date in response to the pressing need to educate the *puellae*. The importance of the entry of children was not shown only in the Rule. As early as October 1191, the queen was pressing the prioress to accept as novices three young girls of noble stock in the convent.¹²⁵ In March 1206 two girls were given to the monastery by their mother and brothers to profess there eventually.¹²⁶ These examples show that *puellae* soon became an important source of recruits, but by no means the only one. At the same time that Sancha was imposing the acceptance of those girls, she was equally favouring the entry of a noble widow, María de Estopiñán. Despite this last piece of information, the idea that from the time of the foundation of Sigena all *sorores* came from the most privileged Aragonese or Catalan classes requires revision.

The three remaining dignitaries, the prioress, subprioress and sacristan, were the most prominent in the monastery and appeared not just in the Rule but in several documents from an early date onwards. Before Sancha's death, references to dignitaries or officials are very scanty, because most decisions were taken by the queen with little advice from the convent so that no names were revealed apart from those of the prioresses. It is relevant that two of the three texts that included personal names of the higher dignitaries before 1210 were drawn up after November 1208.¹²⁷ The dignitary mentioned most extensively in the Rule was the sacristan.¹²⁸ This is not surprising, if we take into account that it was a ritual code and that the sacristan's responsibilities related to the preparation and smooth running of the divine offices.

There were four prioresses between August 1190 and April 1210.¹²⁹ Two of

¹²⁵ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 10.

¹²⁶ Ibid., no. 42.

¹²⁷ January 1209: Sancha Jiménez, subprioress, Raimunda de Roca, sacristan; another *soror*, Beatriz Castellazol, is mentioned with no office assigned to her: *ibid.*, no. 53. April 1210: Oria de Lisa, subprioress, plus the above mentioned Raimunda de Roca and Beatriz de Castellazol: *ibid.*, no. 57.

¹²⁸ The sacristan is mentioned in at least 15 different articles of the Rule; this is the total calculated by Durán Gudiol, but he missed some references: Durán Gudiol, p. 161.

¹²⁹ References to Sancha de Abiego run from August 1190 until November 1192: Ubieto, *Documentos*, nos 9, 10, 11. References to Beatriz de Cabrera run from September 1193 to October 1196: *ibid.*, nos 18, 19, 25. María de Estopiñán is only mentioned once, in December 1098: *ibid.*, no. 30. Ozenda de Lizana was mentioned for the first time in April 1203: *ibid.*, no. 37. She was prioress until her death in 1224.

them, Sancha de Abiego and Ozenda de Lizana, were sisters of one of the most influential nobles in the royal court, Rodrigo de Lizana. Queen Sancha was careful to choose persons close to her family and thus easily amenable to her idea of what Sigena should be. María de Estopiñán, the third prioress, was probably a member of the queen's circle or was at least acquainted with her, because she personally implored Sancha to be admitted into Sigena. Seven years later she had already risen to the highest position in the house.¹³⁰ The power of these prioresses was very much curtailed by the queen's effective direction of the monastery. Only in a few cases did the head of the convent seem to act autonomously, as in April 1194 when the Prioress Beatriz de Cabrera and the commander Guillermo de Besons offered protection to Guillermo Garona and to his brother in exchange for an annual payment. The overpowering figure of Sancha was not then present and that allowed some members of the convent, both women and men, to emerge.¹³¹

At these initial stages, offices of the convent can only be known through the Rule. The code presented only a formal sketch which did not imply the actual existence of all the offices at all times.¹³² In fact post-1210 thirteenth-century documentary evidence only mentioned *cantrices*, *cellararie*, *camerarie* and *infirmarie*.¹³³ We may assume that specific practical functions, such as those fulfilled by *refectorarie* and *helemosinarie*, would always have had an officer appointed to carry them out, but it is not at all certain that the monastery always had a *precentrix*, a *paraphonista*, a *dormitoraria* or a *minutrix sanguinis*.

Early Sigena within the Church: Popes, Diocesans and Hospitaller Provincial Structures

The nature and status of Sigena were totally different from those of a simple commandery. The individual administrative units of the Order did not require official papal recognition, but the peculiarities of one of the first major female Hospitaller monasteries had to be approved by the Church of Rome. Pope Celestine III granted protection to the new foundation on 3 June 1193.¹³⁴ He confirmed what he considered to be the main principles on which it was based, namely the *ordo canonicus* of Saint Augustine and the *institutiones* added by the Bishop of Huesca and the Castellan of Amposta at the instigation of Queen Sancha. The pope also gave his confirmation to the original and future endowments of the house and

¹³⁰ Ibid., no. 30.

¹³¹ Ibid., no. 19. Three *sorores* subscribed the charter – the prioress, the subprioress and Sancha de Abiego, who might have been the former prioress; three local *fratres*, the commander, the chaplain and Fr. Morelo, also subscribed it.

¹³² For a summary of the offices and of the articles in which they are mentioned, Duran Gudiol, p. 161.

¹³³ Ubieto, *El Real Monasterio de Sigena*, p. 33.

¹³⁴ CH, no. 947 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 17.

decreed some basic rules concerning the entry and stability of *sorores* in Sigena.¹³⁵ Any free woman, who had no other bonds and wished to retreat from the world could be accepted but, once admitted, she would not be allowed to leave without licence of the prioress, unless she chose a stricter order. The usual tithe privileges were granted; animal fodder and lands newly brought under cultivation that were tilled directly by the monastery would be free from dues. The reference to the election of the prioress was vague; she would be appointed by the majority of the sounder part of the convent, according to the Rule of Saint Augustine. Clause 56 of the Rule of Sigena had in fact been far more precise.¹³⁶

The most relevant aspect of the papal bull concerned the subjection of the convent to higher Church authorities. The *decretum* established that Sigena would be subject to the pope and to the Castellan of Amposta.¹³⁷ That meant exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. This crucial autonomy was shared by the rest of the Order and was most clearly revealed in the spiritual punishments imposed by the Church.¹³⁸ The pope granted the monastery the usual liberties that exemption implied. In case of a general interdict in the area, the monastery could celebrate the divine office discreetly. Excommunication or a specific interdict on the house could not be imposed on Sigena *sine manifesta et rationabili causa*. The *decretum*, which summed up the jurisdictional standing of the new foundation, anchored it firmly to the institution to which it belonged, the Hospitaller Order; no episcopal interference was to disturb the relationship between the monastery and the Castellany of Amposta.

Innocent III renewed the papal protection to Sigena in a bull of 5 May 1200.¹³⁹ The text was a shortened version of Celestine III's privilege, but the pope later introduced basic changes in the status of the monastery when he submitted the house to the Diocese of Lleida in 1203. The information about this important change comes from a cursory reference by Paul Kehr, who merely stated that only in 1203

¹³⁵ The villages and castles specifically mentioned are *Senam, Sexenam, Villam Novam et Sanctam Leciniam*. *Villa Nova* obviously refers to the nearby new settlement of the old population of Sigena, displaced by the construction of the convent. Agustín Ubieto thinks that the new village did not appear so soon, and that this mention is a mistake and should be substituted for the otherwise missing Urgellet: Ubieto, *El Real Monasterio de Sigena*, p. 56; *idem*, *Documentos*, no. 17. The fact that the castle of Santa Lecina was mentioned by the pope as part of the dominions of Sigena shows that the fortress was not involved in the negotiations with the Temple, and that it had not yet been returned to the Hospitallers as stated in October 1187.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 8.

¹³⁷ 'salva sedis apostolice auctoritate et magistri Hospitalis Emposte debita reverentia': *CH*, no. 947 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 17.

¹³⁸ For a general view of exemption in the Hospital and in other military orders, see Luis García-Guijarro Ramos, 'Exemption in the Temple, the Hospital and the Teutonic Order: Shortcomings of the Institutional Approach', in *MO*, 2, pp. 289–93.

¹³⁹ *CH*, no. 1121 = Demetrio Mansilla, *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III (965–1216)* (Rome, 1955), no. 226 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 32.

did Sigena pass from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Huesca to that of Lleida.¹⁴⁰ He surely was referring to the pope's decision of 27 May 1203 to end the long struggle on boundaries between both dioceses by a compromise, which subjected the southern part of the area between the Cinca and the Alcanadre Rivers to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Lleida.¹⁴¹ We do not know if that local switch of diocesan allegiances produced a specific text for Sigena; it probably did not, but it brought important changes to the house. It is known from later references that it meant a considerable reduction of Sigena's exemption and that it certainly increased the autonomy of the convent in relation to the Order's regional government. Although there is no information on this point, it is quite likely that the Bishop of Lleida wanted to increase his power over the monastery and that Queen Sancha did not oppose him because the balance between a stronger diocesan jurisdiction and Hospitaller regional power was the best way of preserving some sort of autonomy for the convent.

The new link with the Bishop of Lleida was reasserted in a privilege granted by Innocent III to Sigena on 9 May 1207.¹⁴² That text was based on Celestine III's bull of 1193 but Innocent corrected some of its points and added two others. The main difference appeared in the *decretum*. The basic allegiance to the papacy, matched by due reverence to the Castellan, was converted into a dual ultimate subjection, to the papacy and to the diocesan, which thus transformed the previous main subordination to the pope into a double one, to him and to the Bishop of Lleida, while the *debita reverentia* owed to the Castellan was placed in a less significant third place.¹⁴³ The emergence of the bishop as an important party in all affairs related to Sigena was made clear in the alterations and additions to the original text of 1193. If the *sorores* could not reach an agreement on the election of the prioress, the Castellan would be called to the convent to put an end to the discord, but the counsel of the bishop would be required. The pope added that this type of Hospitaller

¹⁴⁰ Kehr, p. 188. Mansilla (*La documentación*, no. 290) and Ubieta (*Documentos*, no. 35) relied on this piece of general information but they understood it wrongly as a text dealing specifically with Sigena.

¹⁴¹ Antonio Durán Gudiol, *Colección diplomática de la catedral de Huesca*, vol. 2 (Zaragoza, 1969), no. 634 = *Die Register Innocenz' III.*, vol. 6: *Pontifikatsjahr, 1203/1204*, ed. Othmar Hageneder et al. (Vienna, 1995), no. 75. For the long border struggle between the two dioceses: Antonio Ubieta Arteta, 'Disputas entre los obispos de Huesca y Lérida en el siglo XII', *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón*, 2 (1946).

¹⁴² *CH*, no. 1261 (summary) = Mansilla, no. 365 = Ubieta, *Documentos*, no. 43. Delaville le Roulx inserts in *CH*, no. 1257, a previous bull of 9 March 1207 of which he gives only a summary, interpreting it as a renewal of Celestine III's privilege, and the *Datum* which is identical to the text of 9 May. There may have been just one bull; the French scholar may have misread the month. Ubieta dates this bull to 9 May, a correction that makes it even clearer that there may be only one privilege, a renewal of the bull of 1193 with significant changes: *Documentos*, no. 44.

¹⁴³ 'Salva sedis apostolice auctoritate, diocesani episcopi canonica iustitia et magistro Hospitalis Emposte debita reverentia': Mansilla, no. 365 = Ubieta, *Documentos*, no. 43.

intervention could not be used to force changes in the election procedure fixed by the convent's Rule. An appeal to the diocesan was also included in an additional clause that, as already established in 1187, expressly forbade the prioress or the convent to accept, expel or move any *soror* from the community without the Castellan's knowledge. If they did not follow this requirement and the Castellan could not deal with the situation, he and the bishop would step in and proceed according to the Rule of Saint Augustine.¹⁴⁴ This is a clear proof of how the submission to Lleida made the bishop's power equivalent in many ways to that of the Castellan. The reference to the Augustinian precepts implies that the code written by Ricardo of Huesca was an *additamentum* to the fundamental ordinances of the house, which continued to be the Rule of Saint Augustine. One additional point in the bull of 9 May 1207 is worth mentioning. The papal protection was extended to all the convent's original territories with no omissions apart from the castle of Santa Lecina, which probably had already been given back to the Castellan.¹⁴⁵

The monastery came into contact with other bishops when grants in their dioceses necessitated agreements on their respective rights. Donations of Alfonso II to Queen Sancha in the region of the city of Tarragona in Catalonia had caused conflicts with that see. On 5 April 1198 both sides reached an agreement; Archbishop Raimundo recognized Sancha's control over the castle and village of Montroig and over the estate of Codong, which she had handed to the Hospitallers in 1188, while the queen renounced any claim to other places in the area. Sancha kept her dominion over Montroig and its tithes, but its churches were given to Sigena along with the ecclesiastical rents attached to them.¹⁴⁶ In assigning them to the convent, the archbishop was probably only giving his assent to a previous grant by Sancha. On the very same day, Archbishop Raimundo reached a compromise with the monastery over its rights over those churches. Rents, the establishment of places for worship and the presentation of clerics would be enjoyed by Sigena, while the legal institution of churches, the ordination of clerics and the acceptance of those chaplains presented by the monastery would remain in the hands of the see. The right of presentation remained even when the candidate was deemed unsuitable by diocesan authorities or had subsequently to be removed for canonical reasons; the person might not be accepted but the right would not be affected.¹⁴⁷ This was the usual arrangement between bishops and military orders in relation to local churches.

¹⁴⁴ 'Statuimus autem, ut non liceat Hospitalis priorissam vel conventum de domo ipsa eiicere vel aliquam sororum mutare aut statuere in eadem; sed si contigerit priorissam vel aliquam sororum excedere, ita quod per vos [magistrum Emposte] emendari non possit, per priorem Emposte ac diocesanum episcopum in eodem monasterio secundum beati Augustini, quam servatis, regulam corrigatur': Mansilla, no. 365 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 43.

¹⁴⁵ 'Sexenam, in quo prefatum monasterium situm est. Villam Novam, Senam, Ontinenam et Urgelletum': Mansilla, no. 365 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 43.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 29.

¹⁴⁷ *CH*, no. 1018 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 28.

It also shows how the favour of the queen allowed Sigena to enjoy influence and rents outside Aragon.

The bull of 9 May 1207, which gave the Bishop of Lleida the power to intervene in the affairs of the monastery of Sigena, encouraged the Order to redefine the relationship of the convent with the Castellan of Amposta. On 1 October 1207 the Hospitaller Master Garin de Montaigu, ostensibly at Sancha's request, accepted an agreement which took the form of a confirmation of the exchange of properties that had taken place in October 1187 and March 1188.¹⁴⁸ The most significant part of the new entente involved the repetition of the points that had been approved 20 years earlier as guidelines for the relationship between the convent and the Order, as well as significant corrections and additions to them. This readiness to act revealed Hospitaller concerns, which were affecting even the highest officers of the Order. While the agreements of 1187 and 1188 had been arranged with the regional authorities, this confirmation and renewal were issued by the Master of the Hospital at the request of Queen Sancha who, near the end of her life, still retained supreme control over Sigena. It is possible that a few months earlier, she had engineered or at least approved the entry onto the stage of the Bishop of Lleida. Before her death, she was apparently balancing the two authorities to secure for the convent the highest degree of autonomy.

The twelve points agreed in October 1187 covered aspects of the relationship of Sigena with the Castellan. Eleven of them related directly to items included in the text of October 1187. One of those was an addition that clearly revealed some knowledge of the papal bull made public only five months earlier. The convent could admit up to 30 *sorores* or even more if the house found it possible to maintain them. Innocent III had suggested precisely the same number as a maximum in May; another significant addition not included in the Pope's letter was the requirement of the Castellan's consent to any entry.¹⁴⁹ The majority of the other points were literal repetitions of the 1187 versions. In the cases where slight corrections were introduced, these tended to reaffirm the Castellan's power, but also to recall its limits. The disciplinary intervention of the Castellan in situations that went beyond the corrective capacity of the convent was subtly stressed; in extreme cases, which implied deposition and expulsion, he was to be assisted by other *fratres*.¹⁵⁰ The clearest expression of this switch may be seen in the only point that did not refer to

¹⁴⁸ CH, no. 1272 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 46.

¹⁴⁹ Above, p. 141, n. 123.

¹⁵⁰ 'Si autem tantum fuerit delictum quod ipsa [priorissa] nesciat illud corrigere advocet magistrum Emposte, et eius consilio et doctrina id corrigatur et emendatur': 1187, CH, no. 835 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 5. 'Et si contigerit eandem priorissam vel aliquam sororem excessum facere, si excessus ipse per conventum non potuerit emendari per magistrum Emposte secundum Hospitalis regulam corrigatur in eadem domo. Et si talis fuerit excessus qui depositionem et eiectionem meruerit, magister Emposte, convocatis secum religiosos personis de fratribus Hospitalis in ipso negotio sancte et canonice procedat consilio conventus sororum illius loci': 1 October 1207, CH, no. 1272 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 46.

the 1187 text, and that was a modified repetition of Celestine III's reference in 1193 to the election of prioresses. The internal election system which demanded the decision of a qualified majority would require the Castellan's approval as well as the assent of the queen while she lived.¹⁵¹ It may be assumed that, despite papal silence in 1193, no election would have run counter to the wishes of the Order and above all to those of the queen, but to make them explicit was another clear sign of the desire to emphasize the link between Sigena and the Hospitaller regional structure.

It is highly relevant that the Master's text made no mention of the Bishop of Lleida, whose jurisdiction over the monastery had been imposed by the pope only five months earlier. If Sancha had arranged or at least tolerated the submission to the diocesan, she must also have wished to reassure the Hospitallers when allowing them to express their control over Sigena in slightly firmer terms. The wording of these terms was balanced by an explicit recognition of the limits of the Castellan's power. The prioress would fix the amount of the annual contribution to the East and the provincial *fratres* could not seize anything else from the convent on that account. The prioress's obedience to the Castellan would not be observed in the case of irregular demands made *contra honestatem et religionem*. A final point touched on the financial responsibility of the regional Hospitaller authorities towards the monastery. In spite of the exclusion from any liability for monastic debts that the Castellany had extracted from Pedro II in 1202, the 1187 reference was rewritten in a more compelling form 20 years later.¹⁵²

The Hospitaller authorities in the West and Queen Sancha reached in 1187 a preliminary balance between autonomy of the new foundation and control over it by the Order. That was possible mainly because the power of Sancha, the royal founder of the house, was the main factor in preserving its freedom of action. In 1207 the old consensus had to be renewed to meet new requirements; in particular the submission to the Bishop of Lleida was a bold but necessary move if the monastery wished to prevent its absorption into the Order's administrative structure. No autonomy would have been possible after the queen's death unless the monastery had been placed under the influence of some other power, and diocesan jurisdiction, traditionally opposed to exempt orders, was the obvious choice. This interplay required a new agreement with the Castellan, but the nature of one of the first large Hospitaller female monasteries made it impossible for it to be accommodated easily within the

¹⁵¹ 'nisi quam sorores communi consensu vel sororum maior pars consilii sanioris, secundum Dei timorem et beati Augustini regulam providerint eligendam': 3 June 1193, *CH*, no. 946 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 17. 'nisi ea quam sorores communi assensu vel sororum maior pars sanioris consilii et per consilium magistri Emposte vel vestri [Sancie regine] dum vixeritis, secundum Dei timorem et regulam suma providerint eligendam': 1 October 1207, *CH*, no. 1272 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 46.

¹⁵² In case of financial distress, 'sit in providentia magistri eis subvenire et earum inopiam misericorditer sublevare': October 1187, *CH*, no. 835 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 5. 'erit in providentia magistri Emposte ut domui eidem competenti subsidio debeat subvenire': 1 October 1207, *CH*, no. 1272 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 46.

structure of the Hospital. The difficult relationship between Sigena and the regional authorities of the Order, which was one of the most relevant aspects of the convent's development during the late Middle Ages, was conditioned by the events of the period from 1188 to 1210.

Economic and Social Roots of the New Foundation

Its relationship with the papacy, the diocesans and the Castellan of Amposta determined the way in which the monastery was positioned within the Western Church, but these distant external connections needed to be accompanied by the growth of strong local roots. Without them it would have remained a project with little future for, like any other spiritual enterprise, Sigena had to rest on sound economic foundations. These could be provided only through the development of a variety of social links that would tie a growing number of persons to the house.

Sigena was, like any monastery, a centre for spiritual perfection which attracted persons who wished to benefit from the life of prayer within the community of *sorores*. Confraternity allowed people to share in monastic activities without becoming full members of the community. That was the case of Guillermo, chaplain of Satervio, who became a *confrater* in 1199 with the express commitment of not switching his allegiance to any other religious house; this connection involved the payment of an annual rent and of a considerable sum of money on his death.¹⁵³ Previously, in May 1194, Pedro de Estelela de San Martín had tied himself to the convent in the same way; he stated that if he should die childless all his movables would pass to the monastery.¹⁵⁴ Pedro Folch's wife Guillerma became a *confratrissa* in October 1207 with her husband's consent; the annual rent of some houses in Lleida was given to Sigena.¹⁵⁵ Pedro de Benavarre and his wife and family associated themselves with the sisters in June 1193, when they arranged to be buried in the monastic cemetery and to benefit from the spiritual works of the house after granting an orchard to Sigena.¹⁵⁶ The tentacular links that the convent developed in this way always led to economic profit. That was also the case when the monastery acted as a feudal lord and offered protection to those in search of it. In April 1194 Guillermo Garona and his brother Sancho received *protectio ac defensio* from the Hospitaller house and promised a substantial annual payment as an expression of the new link which tied them to Sigena.¹⁵⁷ Dependence in any of its forms implied the receipt of rents or the outright acquisition of land or houses.

¹⁵³ Ibid., no. 31.

¹⁵⁴ APH, S-1/13.

¹⁵⁵ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 45.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., no. 16.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., no. 19.

Economic transactions also reflected the underlying social conditions which inspired them. Several sales of land in Sigena, Tortosa or Barbastro revealed the ultimate submission to the monastery which regulated the cultivation of fields; this connection was expressed in an alienation payment or *aliara* made by the seller to the monastery, even when the latter was the purchaser of the land.¹⁵⁸ The grants made by Sigena or by the Order to individuals also showed the same pattern. When Ferrer de Santa Lecina received an estate in Alcolea and Cascallén from the Castellan in January 1198, he committed himself not to choose any other lord. The rent would be handed to Sigena, an example of how the Castellan was supporting the convent by diverting to it the rent of a *hereditas* that did not belong to that house.¹⁵⁹ Non-Christians were also drawn into Sigena's sphere of influence. In addition to examples given earlier, in June 1205 Pedro II transferred a Jew to the jurisdiction of the monastery.¹⁶⁰

The social dominance of Sigena over a wide area around the monastery and its influence beyond that region, due mainly to Queen Sancha's efforts, favoured the extension of the monastic domains, although the royal grants were by far the most significant. The territorial nucleus of Sigena – Sena, Sigena and Urgellet – had been obtained by Queen Sancha as a result of agreements with the Castellan of Amposta in 1187 and 1188. Alfonso II and Pedro II made additions to the original landed estates with the donation of Candanos between 1188 and 1209 and of Ontiñena in 1194. Although the domains in the Monegros region were greatly increased after 1210,¹⁶¹ Sigena had by then already achieved a strong territorial position along the lower course of the Alcanadre River and in the mountains bordering the monastery to the south. Scattered donations or sales offered Sigena a foothold in other regions, such as Huesca, Barbastro and Lleida, or even in distant places such as Calamocha or Tarragona.¹⁶²

The first years were always the hardest for a new monastic enterprise. Scant resources, lack of popular appeal and tentative responses to every type of problem made life difficult for any recently founded institution. Yet for Sigena the early stages passed smoothly. Although it formed part of a century-old Order, the novelty

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., nos 36 (April 1203), 39 (18 October 1205), 40 (February 1206), 41 (March 1206).

¹⁵⁹ CH, no. 1010 (summary) = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 27.

¹⁶⁰ Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 38.

¹⁶¹ The donations of Pedro II and Jaime I allowed the monastery to expand westerly and southerly: Lanaja in 1212 (CH, no. 1380 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 60); the castle of Sariñena in 1217; Peñalba in 1235 (CH, no. 2124 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 147). Bujaraloz, to the west of Peñalba, was sold to Sigena by the prior of the Order of Saint George of Alfama in 1229 (ibid., no. 132).

¹⁶² Huesca: August 1190 (CH, no. 896 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 9); March 1206 (ibid., no. 42). Barbastro: February 1206 (ibid., no. 40); March 1206 (ibid., no. 41). Lleida: October 1207 (ibid., no. 45). Calamocha: November 1207 (CH, no. 1274 = Ubieto, *Documentos*, no. 47). Montroig in Tarragona: 5 April 1198 (ibid., no. 29).

that a community of *sorores* meant for the Hospitallers might have caused many anxieties and uncertainties if Queen Sancha had not piloted the experiment so enthusiastically. She made of Sigena an immediate success, but her influence also had costs in the long run. The autonomy she envisaged made later relations with the authorities of the Order more difficult. The lavish conception of monastic life which she introduced produced dangerous financial strains on the monastery. On the whole, Sigena owed to Queen Sancha much more than its foundation; she impressed on it a long-lasting character.

Chapter 6

Margaret de Lacy and the Hospital of Saint John at Aconbury, Herefordshire*

Helen J. Nicholson

On 10 October 1216, eight days before his death, King John sent instructions to Walter de Lacy, sheriff of Hereford, by letters patent:

Know that for the sake of God we have conceded to Margaret de Lacy three carucates of land to be assarted and cultivated in our forest of Aconbury, to build there a certain religious house for the souls of William de Braose her father, Matilda her mother and William her brother. And we instruct you to assign those three carucates of land in the aforesaid forest to the same Margaret.¹

* Editors' note: this chapter was originally published in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), 629–51. A few small additions have been made for this edition, which have been placed in square brackets.

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The following additional abbreviations are used in this chapter:

- CPRPL *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, I: 1198-1304, ed. W. H. Bliss (London, 1893)
- MGHS Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores
- PL *Patrologia Latina: Patrologus Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 217 vols and 4 vols of indices (Paris, 1834–64)
- RG *Les registres de Grégoire IX*, ed. L. Auvray, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome (Paris, 1896–1955)
- RS Rolls Series
- TNA: PRO The National Archives: Public Record Office

¹ *Rotuli litterarum patientium in Turri Londenensi asservati*, ed. Thomas Duffus Hardy (London, 1835), 1.1, p. 199b.

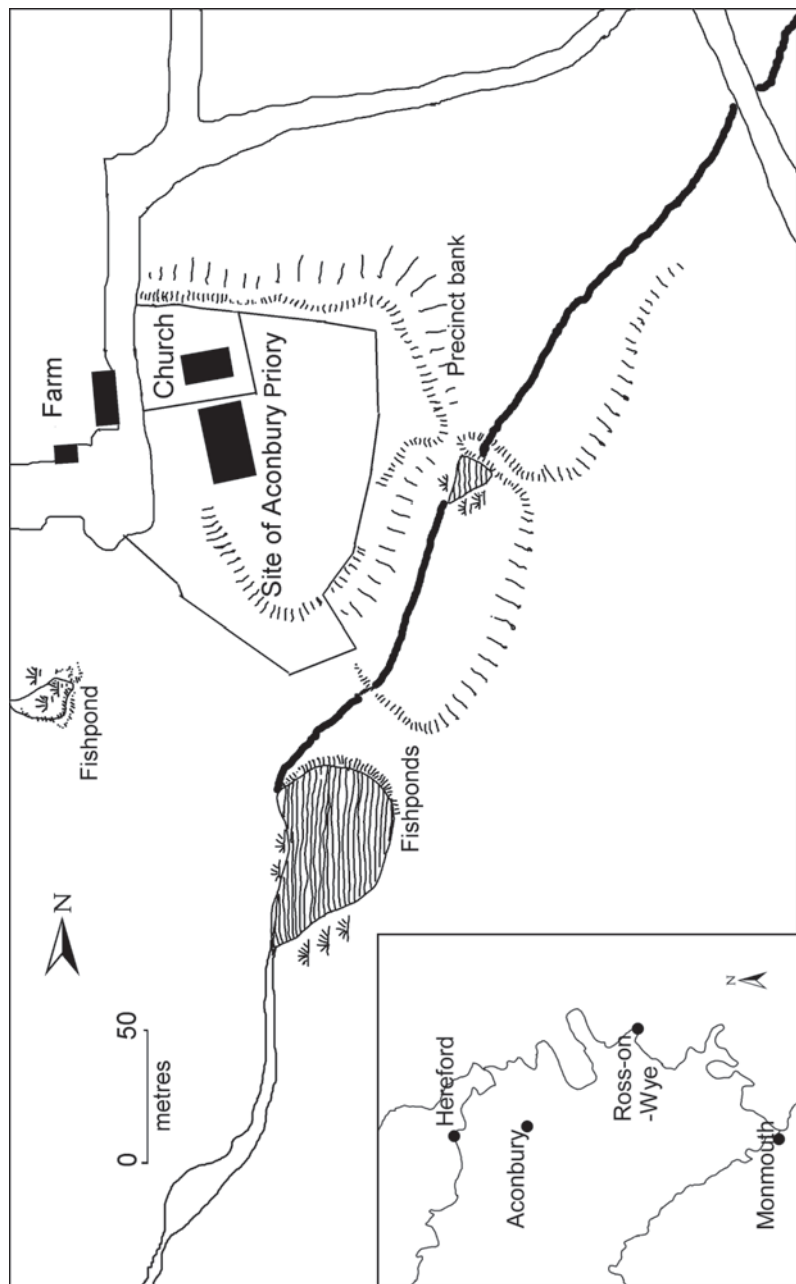


Fig. 6.1 Sketch plan of Aconbury Priory, showing its location. Note the artificially raised area on which the priory and church were built, and the three fishponds

For the historian of King John, this concession indicates that the king was at last prepared to restore to his favour the Braoses and the Lacys, Welsh Marcher lords and barons of Ireland, who had spectacularly fallen from favour in 1208.² Yet for the historian of the military orders and of monastic orders in general, it marks the beginning of a relationship between a patron and a religious house which gives valuable insight into how that relationship could go badly wrong.³

The religious foundation which Margaret de Lacy built on the land granted to her by King John in Aconbury forest was a house for women.⁴ She entrusted it to the

² This concession is described in the final paragraph of Sidney Painter's *The Reign of King John* (Baltimore, 1949), p. 377, as if forming a fitting termination to John's reign. For the fall of the Braoses, or Briouzes, see W. L. Warren, *King John* (London, 1961), pp. 184–7. William de Braose's grandsons remained in prison until 1218: see Ralph Turner, *King John* (London and New York, 1994), p. 221. Walter de Lacy, who fell from royal favour for supporting his father-in-law William de Braose in Ireland, recovered his lands between 1213 and 1215: see J. C. Holt, *Magna Carta*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 203–4; Warren, *King John*, p. 196; for Walter de Lacy's restoration to his Irish lands in 1215 see *Rotuli de oblatiis et finibus in Turri Londinensi*, ed. Thomas Duffus Hardy (London, 1835), pp. 562–4, 601–3.

³ More general discussion of problems which could arise in the relationship between patrons and monastic orders is provided by Emma Mason, 'Timeo barones et dona ferentes', in *Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian*, ed. Derek Baker, *Studies in Church History*, 15 (1978), pp. 61–76.

⁴ For women as founders of religious houses, see discussion below. Today the only visible remains of the Priory of Aconbury are the church and three fishponds (fig. 6.1). The church stands on a grassy hillock in an isolated village surrounded by wooded hills, some three miles south of Hereford. The nunnery buildings, which stood on the south side of the church, were demolished in the nineteenth century and a large house was built on the site. The church (fig. 6.2) is now redundant and is normally kept locked, the key being held by the diocesan secretary. It is used as a store. Extensive restoration work was done on the church in the middle of the nineteenth century: the roof was tiled, much of the stonework was repaired, and the floor was raised so that the bricked-up doorways (which formerly led from the church into the nunnery buildings) now seem very low. High in the south wall at the west end is a square squint, which tradition states led from the prioress's room. Previous studies of Aconbury Priory include D. E. Jones, *Aconbury: The Priory, the Church and the Camp*, a pamphlet produced in the 1940s for Aconbury church; H. G. Bull, 'Fragments of the history of Aconbury priory and church', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* (1883–85), 301–8, and an entry in William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum: A History of the Abbies and other Monasteries, Hospitals, Friaries, and Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, with their Dependencies, in England and Wales*, new edn ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel (London, 1817–30), 6.1, pp. 489–91. More recent is an article by D. Whitehead, 'Aconbury Nunnery: a field survey', *Herefordshire Archaeological News*, 51 (Jan. 1989), 21–3; and see the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments, *Inventory of Historical Monuments in Herefordshire* (London, 1931), 1, pp. 12–13. See also William Rees, *A History of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Wales and on the Welsh Border, including an Account of the Templars* (Cardiff, 1947), pp. 60–61; David Knowles and R. N. Hadcock (eds), *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales*, 2nd edn (London, 1971), pp. 278–9; Sally

brothers of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem. However, in 1237, on her request, Pope Gregory IX commanded that the house be removed from the Hospital of Saint John and transferred to the Rule of Saint Augustine. This transfer from one Order to another came only after a long and bitter legal battle between Margaret and the Hospitallers. The case not only provides a rare opportunity to follow the formidable legal machinery of a military order in action, but also shows how papal intervention could be brought to bear by both laity and religious, and indicates that even the most privileged and powerful religious order could be defeated in the courts by a determined patron, when she had papal support. In addition, the case also provides valuable evidence for the active involvement of a married woman in legal proceedings.⁵

In this article I shall consider why Margaret gave her foundation to the Hospitallers, why dispute arose between the Order and its patron, and how Margaret succeeded in winning her case. I shall argue that she had to misrepresent the facts of the donation in order to win papal judgement in her favour; but this said, she would not have been successful had her case not fitted into a wider papal agenda to reform the organization of women's houses in general and in particular to reform the military orders and make them more effective in the defence of the Holy Land.

In order to understand events behind the foundation of the Priory of Aconbury, it is necessary to examine Margaret de Lacy's family and its history. Margaret was the wife of Walter de Lacy and daughter of William and Matilda de Braose. As stated above, the Lacys and Braoses were powerful Welsh Marcher lords and also held extensive lands in Ireland. Both families were of Norman descent. The Braoses' family seat was at Bramber, in Sussex, while the Lacys' base was at Weobley in Herefordshire. Another branch of the Lacy family was based at Pontefract, in

Thompson, *Women Religious: the Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 50–52, 156, 181, 187, 214.

⁵ In England in the first half of the thirteenth century, as a wife was deemed to be under the custodianship of her husband she did not normally act on her own behalf in the law courts, although she might act as her husband's attorney. For the wife being under the custodianship of her husband, see *Tractatus de legibus et consuetudinibus regni Anglie qui Glanvilla vocatur*, ed. and trans. G. D. Hall (Oxford, 1993), p. 60; Bracton, *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, ed. G. E. Woodbine, trans. Samuel Thorne (Cambridge, MA and London, 1977), 4.335, fo. 429b. For the wife as her husband's attorney, see *Bracton's Note Book. A Collection of Cases decided in the King's Court during the Reign of Henry the Third. Annotated by a Lawyer of that Time, Seemingly by Henry Bracton*, ed. F. W. Maitland (London, 1887), 2, p. 283, no. 342; 3, p. 335, no. 1361; 3, p. 420, no. 1507. See also Ruth Kittel, 'Women under the Law in Medieval England, 1066–1485', in *The Women of England from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present: Interpretive Bibliographical Essays*, ed. Barbara Kanner (London, 1980), p. 131; Jane E. Sayers, *Papal Judges Delegate in the Province of Canterbury, 1198–1254* (Oxford, 1971), p. 228 and note 1. Under canon law, a woman could appear in court to defend her own interests.



Fig. 6.2 Aconbury, Herefordshire: priory church from the north west

Yorkshire.⁶ In Ireland, William de Braose held the honour of Limerick, which had been granted to his father by King Henry II of England. Walter de Lacy's father, Hugh II, had played a leading part in the conquest of Ireland, acquired the old kingdom of Meath in 1172, and was made viceroy of Ireland by Henry II in 1177. Walter succeeded his father in Meath in 1194, and his brother Hugh became Earl of Ulster. Due to these extensive landholdings, both families were extremely rich and influential, especially in the Welsh March and Ireland.

William de Braose was a close friend of King John of England, but from around 1206 the king turned against him. In 1208 William and his family fled to Ireland, where the king pursued them 18 months later. William finally fled into exile in France where he died in 1211. His wife Matilda and eldest son William were captured and died in prison – commonly said to have been starved to death. It is not known why King John turned against the Braoses. Possibly he distrusted their loyalty after the loss of their Norman lands to the French King Philip Augustus in 1204, and saw that they had become too powerful, especially in Ireland. Possibly he judged that they owed him too much money and decided to call in the debt. Roger of Wendover, chronicler of Saint Albans, claimed that they knew too much about the fate of John's nephew Arthur of Brittany, who had apparently died in prison

⁶ For the Lacy family see W. E. Wightman, *The Lacy Family in England and Normandy, 1066–1194* (Oxford, 1966), p. 1. *The Dictionary of National Biography* is useful for the Braoses, and for the Lacys after 1194.

after being captured by John in 1202. He recounted that the Lady Matilda actually declared to the king's messengers that the king had murdered Arthur.⁷ This depiction of Matilda de Braose is interesting for the light it may throw on her daughter's character, especially as another contemporary account of Lady Matilda likewise depicts her as a bold woman of action and determination: 'People said nothing about her husband compared to what they said about her. She was responsible for keeping up the war against the Welsh and conquered much from them.'⁸ Her daughter Margaret was to prove herself equally forceful.

Giles de Braose, the second son of the disgraced William, had become Bishop of Hereford in 1200 and went into exile in 1208 following the papal interdict on England. He returned in 1215, made his peace with the king and was granted his father's estates, but died soon afterwards. In May 1216 King John granted his lands in England and Ireland to his younger brother Reginald.

King John confiscated Walter de Lacy's lands because of Walter's support for the Braoses, but returned them between 1213 and 1215. When the king died Walter was named as an executor of the king's will, as one of the king's most trusted counsellors without whose advice he would do nothing.⁹ Given the favour with which the king held Walter de Lacy by October 1216, it is reasonable to suspect that Walter had some influence in obtaining the king's assent to Margaret's petition for a grant of land on which she could found a religious house for the souls of her parents and elder brother.

Margaret's foundation at Aconbury would have been of great importance to her. It was founded in memory of the members of her family who had met untimely deaths; it was also a monument to her family's reconciliation with the king. In fact, she later informed Pope Gregory IX that it had been founded in memory of King John.¹⁰ According to King John's instructions to Walter de Lacy, it was a Braose family foundation, where nuns interceded with God for Braose souls in the next life, and hence exalted Braose prestige in this life. However, as Aconbury priory was

⁷ Roger of Wendover, *Chronica Rogeri de Wendover liber qui dicitur flores historiarum*, ed. Henry G. Hewlett, RS 84 (London 1886–89), 2, pp. 48–9.

⁸ *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre*, ed. Francisque Michel, Société de l'Histoire de France (Paris, 1840, repr. New York and London 1965), pp. 111–12. For a recent favourable assessment of this source, which dates from the early 1220s, see Sean Duffy, 'King John's expedition to Ireland, 1210: the evidence reconsidered', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (1996), 6–7. [For a broadly similar view of Matilda de Braose, see Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1978), Bk 1 ch. 2, p. 83.]

⁹ 'Ordinationem et dispositionem testamenti mei fidei et dispositioni legitime committo fidelium meorum subscriptorum, sine quorum consilio, etiam in bono statu constitutus, nullatenus in presentia eorum ordinarem': in *Foedera, conventiones, litterae, et cuiuscunque generis acta publica*, ed. Thomas Rymer and Robert Sanderson, then enlarged and amended by Adam Clark and Frederick Holbrooke (London, 1816–69), 1.1, p. 144.

¹⁰ *CH*, 2, no. 2047. Also *RG*, 1, no. 1330; and *CPRPL*, p. 134.

a women's house it was necessary to arrange for priests to come in from outside to perform mass and dispense the other sacraments of the Church to the sisters. In addition it was desirable to place the house under the oversight of an established religious order so that the sisters would be following an approved, spiritually worthy rule of life.

Margaret would have been very careful in choosing a religious order to which she could entrust her precious foundation. She would have wanted a religious order with a good reputation for maintaining high spiritual standards of life, if her nuns were to intercede effectively for the souls of her family. She chose the Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, a military religious order, which had grown out of a hospice for pilgrims in Jerusalem. By 1216 the Hospital and the other leading military Order, the Order of the Temple, were playing a central role in the defence of the remaining Christian territories in the Holy Land against the Muslims, and they were involved in the preparation of a new crusade. Obviously they would have welcomed any donations at this time.

A women's house would have appeared less attractive to the Hospital of Saint John than a men's house, for the Order would not be able to call on the sisters to perform military duties in the Holy Land. Nevertheless, there were several Hospitaller women's houses in Europe, although there was only one other in England, at Buckland on the edge of the village of Durston in Somerset.¹¹ This had been given to the Hospitallers during the 1180s as a house where all the Hospitaller sisters in England could live. In any case, whatever the drawbacks of women's houses for the Hospitallers, Margaret de Lacy was a powerful and wealthy donor and her favour would be valuable for the Order.

Why should Margaret have favoured the Hospitallers? The reasons behind a gift to a religious order are always hard to deduce, especially in this case as the original foundation charter does not seem to have survived: it is not in the cartulary of the house (Public Record Office E 315/55) or the cartulary of the English Hospitallers (British Library MS Cotton Nero E VI). Work by John Walker on donations to the military order of Saint Lazarus in England has indicated that involvement in crusading and family connections were important influences on donations, as well as feudal ties.¹² I shall examine how these influences could have affected Margaret's donation to the Hospital of Saint John.

¹¹ On Hospitaller women's houses see Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), pp. 241–2; Knowles and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales*, p. 284. On Buckland see Thompson, pp. 156–7, 213, 219, 234 [and Struckmeyer, Chapter 4].

¹² John Walker, 'The Motives of Patrons of the Order of St Lazarus in England in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Monastic Studies 1: the Continuity of Tradition*, ed. Judith Loades (Bangor, 1990), pp. 171–81; John Walker, 'Crusaders and patrons: the influence of the crusades on the patronage of the order of St Lazarus', in *MO*, 1, pp. 327–32. In addition, geography was a significant factor for poorer donors, who tended to give to the

Margaret's own family of Braose had no great tradition of crusading which would have brought them into contact with the Hospitallers in the Holy Land; they had been occupied in building up power in Wales and in Ireland. Margaret's father William de Braose had confirmed a donation to the Hospitallers in 1176 or 1177,¹³ but this was the only Braose donation to the Hospitallers until the 1220s, when donations by Margaret's nephew John de Braose were probably prompted by Margaret's own donation at Aconbury.¹⁴ Any dynastic influence on Margaret's choice of the Hospital of Saint John could only have come from her husband's family. The Lacys had some tradition of active concern for defence of the Holy Land: Walter de Lacy's grandfather, Gilbert de Lacy, had been a patron of the other leading military order, the Templars. He had given them Guiting in Gloucestershire, and later joined the Templars himself and went out to the Holy Land. Henry de Lacy of the Yorkshire Lacys had twice travelled to Jerusalem, dying in the Holy Land in 1177, and had confirmed donations to the Templars in Yorkshire.¹⁵ Lacy donations to the Hospitallers, in contrast to those to the Templars, were by members of the family who did not go out to the Holy Land, but who, presumably, wished to give to an order which helped to defend the Holy Land and also played a broader charitable role than the purely military role of the Templars. Agnes de Lacy gave the Hospitallers their commandery at Quenington in Gloucestershire.¹⁶ She was probably a second cousin once removed of Walter de Lacy, and a granddaughter of Hugh, younger brother of Walter's great-grandfather Roger. Sometime between 1189 and 1213, Walter de Langley and his wife Emma de Lacy gave the Hospitallers

nearest available house. See also R. Mortimer, 'Religious and secular motives for some English monastic foundations', in *Religious Motivation*, ed. Baker, pp. 77–85, for discussion of motives for donation to the 'new' orders of the twelfth century. For a study of one family's donations to religious orders, see J. C. Ward, 'Fashions in monastic endowment: the foundations of the Clare family, 1066–1314', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32 (1981), 427–51. For an examination of factors influencing donations to military orders in Europe, see Helen Nicholson, *Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights: Images of the Military Orders, 1128–1291* (Leicester and London 1993), pp. 60–64.

¹³ J. Rogers Rees, 'Slebech commandery and the knights of St John', *Archaeologica Cambrensis*, 14 (1897), 263 (text of the confirmation charter of Bishop Anselm, 1230).

¹⁴ John de Braose was also a donor to Aconbury: TNA: PRO E 315/55, fo. 24v: see also Dugdale, *Monasticon*, 6.1, p. 491; for Bishop Anselm's confirmation of his donation of Ilston church in the Gower, land in Cwmbwrla and Millwood in Sketty, see Rogers Rees, 'Slebech commandery', 102; and see Rees, *A History of the Order of St John*, p. 31. [John de Braose had recently married Margaret, daughter of Prince Llywelyn ap Iorwerth of Gwynedd, who himself went on to confirm the Hospitallers' possessions at Ysptyt Ifan in north Wales. On John de Braose as lord of Gower see Derek Draisley, *A History of Gower* (Almeley, 2002), pp. 54–7.]

¹⁵ Wightman, pp. 189, 207; 82–4, 104, n. 1, 112.

¹⁶ Wightman, p. 207, incorrectly assigns this commandery to the Templars: see *Rotuli chartarum in Turri Londinensi asservati*, ed. Thomas Duffus Hardy (London, 1837), 1.1, p. 16, for King John's confirmation of the gift.

the church of Siddington and three virgates.¹⁷ In Ireland, Hugh de Lacy, Walter de Lacy's father, founded the Hospitallers' commandery at Castleboy in Ulster, and Walter himself founded their commandery at Kilmainhembeg, near Kells.¹⁸ Moreover, when Walter made his peace with King John in July 1215 for his lands in Ireland, the Hospitallers of Clerkenwell, London, acted as intermediaries, holding copies of the agreement at Clerkenwell until it had been carried out.¹⁹ Hence, it is likely that Margaret's decision to entrust her house to the Hospitallers was influenced by her husband and her husband's family.

Feudal ties do not appear to have been a factor in this donation. However, we may note King John's instruction to his executors, among them Walter de Lacy, to provide help for the Holy Land.²⁰ One way of doing this would have been to give a donation to the Order of the Hospital. Yet Margaret herself may have felt that a donation was appropriate to support the Order during the Fifth Crusade (1217–21) which was just commencing when she founded her house; it is not necessary to suppose the late king's will was an important stimulus.

In short, Margaret's choice of the Hospital of Saint John was probably influenced by her husband's connections with the Order, and those of his family. However, there were also personal factors to take into account. According to Pope Gregory IX's later record of Margaret's account of events, which he set out in his first letter on the case of April 1233, the Hospitallers themselves asked Margaret to give her foundation to them.

Led by her own simplicity and induced by the urgings of the brothers of the Hospital of Jerusalem, without having consulted the diocesan bishop, without even the knowledge of Walter de Lacy her husband, she put this house under the authority of the said brothers, believing that it was permissible for women's foundations to be formed under their observance. When she had brought certain women into that house, the same brothers received their profession and gave them their badge and habit.²¹

It would have been perfectly reasonable for the Hospitallers, who were already on good terms with Walter de Lacy following his foundation in Ireland and their role in his reconciliation with King John, to have approached Margaret and suggested that she entrust her new foundation to them. Possession of the priory at Aconbury would

¹⁷ The donation charter is in the Nelthorpe Collection, Gloucestershire Record Office. I am indebted to Professor Peter Coss for this information. Emma's relationship to the rest of the Lacy family is unclear, but she probably belonged to the Herefordshire branch of the family.

¹⁸ Aubrey Gwynn and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in Ireland* (London, 1970), pp. 335, 337.

¹⁹ *Rotuli de oblatis et finibus*, 562–4, 601–3; *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, ed. H. S. Sweetman (London 1875), 1, p. 93, no. 596.

²⁰ *Foedera*, 1.1, p. 144.

²¹ *CH*, 2, no. 2047, 8 April 1233; *RG*, 1, no. 1330, *CPRPL*, 134.

have been a valuable contribution to the Hospitaller properties in Herefordshire; the Order already had a commandery at Hope under Dinmore, north of Hereford, and property in Hereford.²² This personal approach by the Hospitallers can be identified as the decisive factor which prompted Margaret to make her donation to this Order, but she would probably not have chosen it had it not already been well regarded by her husband and his family.

However, it is clear from Margaret's account of events that something had gone badly wrong between patron and Order by April 1233, for it is unlikely that she had in fact given the priory to the Hospital on a whim, without proper consultation. Possibly she had proceeded without the bishop's approval; but her husband had certainly been involved in the foundation. Not only had he been instructed by King John to put Margaret de Lacy in possession of the land for the foundation, but in a charter of 1232, King Henry III referred to 'the religious house of Aconbury which Walter de Lacy and Margaret his wife ... founded there in honour of Saint John the Baptist'. As St John the Baptist was the patron of the Order of the Hospital, the king was in effect stating that the donation to the Hospital was made jointly by Walter and Margaret. In addition, by June 1233 the pope was including him with Margaret as co-founder of the priory.²³ However, if in fact Margaret had given Aconbury Priory to the Hospitallers without consulting her husband, her donation would have been invalid, since under the English common law the married woman could not alienate her lands without her husband's consent.²⁴ As an expert in the canon law, Pope Gregory IX would also have considered that women should be under the guardianship of men,²⁵ and would have expected Margaret to have consulted her husband before endowing a religious order with land. It was normal practice for a married woman endowing or founding a religious house to act in concert with her

²² Rees, *A History of the Order of St John*, 39–44; *Liber Feodorum: the Book of Fees, commonly called Testa de Nevill. Reformed from the Earliest MS by the Deputy Keeper of the Records* (London, 1920–31), 1, pp. 101 n. 1, and 102.

²³ *Rotuli litterarum patentium*, 1.1, p. 199b; *Calendar of the Charter Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office*, 1: *Henry III, 1226–1257* (London, 1903), p. 172; *CH*, 2, no. 2059; *RG*, 1, no. 1422; *CPRPL*, 136. After the house was transferred to the Augustinian order, Walter confirmed his wife's gifts to it: TNA: PRO E 315/55, fo. 34r; Dugdale, *Monasticon*, 6.1, p. 490

²⁴ C. Donahue Jnr, 'What Causes Fundamental Legal Ideas? Marital Property in England and France in the Thirteenth Century', *Michigan Law Review*, 78 (1979–80), 65; F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1923), 2, pp. 406–7, 410–11.

²⁵ See, for instance, James Brundage, 'Sexual equality in medieval canon law', in Joel T. Rosendahl (ed.), *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History* (Athens GA and London, 1990), pp. 66–7 and p. 73, note 6; for Pope Gregory IX as a canonist, see James Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London, 1995), p. 186.

husband; generally, only widows founded or endowed religious houses in their own name alone.²⁶

Another peculiarity in the pope's account of events is the remark that Margaret believed that it was permissible for women's foundations to be formed under the Hospitallers' observance. There is no doubt that this was permissible: there were several Hospitaller women's houses in Europe, such as Buckland in England, Sigena in Aragon, and Pisa in Italy.²⁷ However, the fact that the pope mentions the subject at this point and in these terms implies that Margaret had subsequently discovered that the Hospitallers' Rule did not permit them to have women's houses. It was certainly true that some religious orders did not accept women's houses, or at least preferred not to accept them,²⁸ but this was not the case for the Hospital. Moreover, if the Hospitallers' Rule did not permit women's houses, the Hospitallers would not have approached Margaret and asked her to give them her new foundation. Yet, nevertheless, in his final judgement of the case in July 1237, Pope Gregory stated clearly that it was not the practice of the Order of the Hospital to have women's houses.²⁹ Probably he believed that the Hospital should not accept women's houses, as this distracted the Order from its proper task of defending the Holy Land, and the association of men and women could lead to scandal. In any case, on this basis Margaret's donation would have been invalid.

Thirdly, it is interesting that the pope three times referred to Margaret's *simplicitas* during the course of his account of the case. This could mean simple in mind, but also meant 'of straightforward character' or 'uneducated'. When used by papal chancery in the course of legal cases it was often contrasted with *malicia*, and

²⁶ For examples of married women endowing or founding religious houses in concert with their husbands, see P. D. Johnson, 'Agnes of Burgundy: an Eleventh-century Woman as Monastic Patron', *Journal of Medieval History*, 15 (1989), 93–104; Thompson, pp. 165, 166, 172–7, 190; for examples of widows acting alone, see *ibid.*, pp. 182, 167–77. *Earldom of Gloucester Charters*, ed. R. B. Patterson (Oxford, 1973), contains numerous examples of donations to religious houses by Countesses Mabel, Hawise and Isabel; but these are with their husband's consent or concurrent with a donation by their husband, for example, nos 4, 8 and 9, 163 and 164; or in their widowhood: for example, nos 114, 167. Some donation charters issued by the Countess of Gloucester alone do not state clearly that she was a widow at the time of the donation, but the wording of the charter implies that she was: for example, nos 55, 56, 58, 78. On the other hand, for two foundations by Countess Agnes of Burgundy as sole patron although she was then married, see Johnson, 'Agnes of Burgundy', 96, 97, 102 n. 9.

²⁷ See Riley-Smith, pp. 241–2. [Beaulieu in France was not founded until later in the thirteenth century: see L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8.]

²⁸ C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (London, 1989), pp. 216–37, especially 227–30; for women in the military orders in general, see Forey, Chapter 2.

²⁹ *CH*, 2, no. 2167; *RG*, 2, no. 3780; *CPRPL*, p. 163.

meant that the person in question had acted unwisely or foolishly, but without bad intentions, and ought to be let off lightly.³⁰

In short, the pope's account depicts Margaret's donation to the Hospital of Saint John as invalid, and indicates that it should be nullified. The reasons for this were, firstly, that Margaret had acted alone, without consulting her husband as the law required, and without consulting the bishop, as would have been advisable in religious matters. Secondly, she had given a women's house to an Order that could not receive women. Finally, because these were genuine errors, made in good faith, she was deserving of papal mercy.

Clearly Margaret had changed her mind about the Hospitallers so far that she wanted her house removed from their control. What had gone wrong?

According to the pope's letter of April 1233, Margaret de Lacy came personally to the papal court to request that Aconbury Priory be removed from the control of the Hospitallers and allowed to live under the Rule of Saint Augustine. He described her reason for this request as follows:

She came personally to our presence when she realised that according to the terms of their profession, if the prior of the aforesaid Hospital so ordered, the nuns were bound to transfer to other places and to go overseas; because she would be cheated of her desire if the women should be removed or transferred from there. Claiming in her simplicity that the aforesaid women had professed the rule of the blessed Augustine, which she believed because they mainly follow and still follow that rule in the divine offices, she obtained a letter from us to our venerable brother the bishop of Hereford. This letter ordered him to enforce our ruling that they should lay down the habit of the Hospital and live by the aforementioned rule [of Saint Augustine].³¹

This account does not square with what we know of the Hospital of Saint John at this period. It is very unlikely that the Hospitallers would have summoned the nuns to serve overseas, because the usual reason for summoning members overseas was to perform administrative service for the Order or military service in the Holy Land, neither of which were duties of Hospitaller sisters. The insult to their noble donor and the costs involved would far outweigh any advantage of moving the sisters to another women's house overseas. Hence Margaret's claim that the Hospital could move her sisters overseas is very puzzling. Possibly Margaret suspected or feared

³⁰ There are some particularly good examples of this use of the word *simplicitas* in the registers of Pope Innocent III: see, for instance, *Opera omnia Innocenti III: liber regestorum sive epistolarum*, year 9, no. 103 and year 10, no. 34: in *PL*, 215, col. 1042B, 1129–30. For the distinction between *simplicitas*, which will be forgiven, and *malicia*, which will not, see *ibid.* year 6, no. 193, *PL*, 215, col. 128D, and *Innocentii III operum pars altera: sermones I: sermones de tempore*, no. 11, in *PL*, 217, col. 360C.

³¹ *CH*, 2, no. 2047; *RG*, 1, no. 1330; *CPRPL*, p. 134.

that the Hospitallers intended to move her nuns to Buckland, with the other English sisters; but again, it seems unlikely that the Hospital would insult a noble donor in this way. I shall set this problem aside for the moment and consider Margaret's other claims.

Margaret implied that she was confused about her nuns' position; she had not understood what entrusting her nuns to the Hospital of Saint John would actually involve, and she had really intended her women to be Augustinian canonesses. She had put them under the authority of the Hospitallers only because she genuinely thought that they would continue to follow the Augustinian Rule.

At first glance, this would seem to be a reasonable error. Many hospitals did follow the Rule of Saint Augustine,³² as did many women's houses, although the same women's house might claim to follow the Rule of Saint Augustine, the Cistercian Rule or the Rule of Saint Benedict at different periods.³³

In addition, although the Rule of the Hospital was not the same as the Augustinian Rule, the Rule followed by Hospitaller sisters was close to the Augustinian Rule. The Rule of the Hospital had been drawn up for a hospitaller religious order and was intended to provide for the care of the sick as well as a spiritual life,³⁴ but Hospitaller sisters did not generally care for the sick; [many] lived an enclosed lifestyle, like that of other nuns.³⁵ Hence, after the Hospitaller women's house at Sigena was founded by Queen Sancha of Aragon in 1187, a special rule had been drawn up for it, compiled as a combination of the Augustinian Rule and the Rule of the Hospital.³⁶ An outsider's confusion could have been compounded by the fact that the Hospitallers' women's house at Buckland had been an Augustinian house before it was transferred to the Hospitallers in the 1180s.³⁷

However, in the three decades or so between the transfer of Buckland to the Hospital and Margaret's foundation of her house at Aconbury, it had become clear that the Hospital of Saint John and the Augustinian Order were very different. The events of 1187 and the Third Crusade had made clear to western European writers that the Hospital of Saint John was not only a hospital, but also deeply involved in military activity. Before 1187, western European chroniclers hardly ever mentioned the Hospitallers' involvement in battle; but in their reporting of the events of 1187

³² Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000–1300* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 49–50.

³³ Thompson, pp. 3, 101–2, 202.

³⁴ *CH*, 1, no. 70.

³⁵ Anthony Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers' Medical Tradition: 1291–1530', in *MO*, 1, pp. 74–5. A few women's houses were given hospices: for one example see Riley-Smith, p. 241 and n. 3.

³⁶ *CH*, 1, nos 835 (foundation), 859 (Rule). [This interpretation of these documents is now subject to question: see García-Guijarro, Chapter 5.]

³⁷ *A Cartulary of Buckland Priory in the County of Somerset*, ed. Frederic W. Weaver, Somerset Record Society, 25 (1909), nos 1–12; Thompson, pp. 156–7.

and the subsequent campaigns the Hospitallers were frequently mentioned.³⁸ Since Walter de Lacy had become lord of Meath in 1189, the Hospital which he had patronized in Ireland had become widely known to be a military order. As noted above, in 1216, when Margaret was founding her house, the Hospitallers were actively involved in organizing a new crusade. It would seem incredible for her not to have been aware that this 'Hospital' was far from being an ordinary, localized, Augustinian hospital.

The two Orders were also very different in structure and organization. The Augustinians were an Order only in the loosest sense. Until the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 there was no central control or supervision of houses. Augustinian canons and canonesses followed an adapted version of the guidelines that Saint Augustine of Hippo had drawn up for his sister and her nuns in the fifth century. Each house also had its own customs, and was effectively autonomous.³⁹ The Order of the Hospital, on the other hand, had a supreme master in the Holy Land. Although it was less centralized than the Order of the Temple, its English houses were subject to the authority of a prior based at the Hospital at Clerkenwell, near London. European houses were bound to send a third of their annual revenue (the responsion) to the Order's headquarters in the Holy Land to further the Order's work there.⁴⁰ Taking these differences alongside the international fame of the Hospital for its exploits against the Muslims, it is difficult to believe that Margaret thought that when she gave her foundation to the Hospitallers she was merely entrusting her nuns to a version of the Augustinian Order.

It is possible that Margaret had acted on a whim, without proper research into the nature of the Order to which she was entrusting her nuns' spiritual welfare. Yet it is unlikely that a patron would have been so careless with a religious house dedicated

³⁸ The only European chronicler writing before 1187 who mentions the Hospitallers' active involvement on the battlefield was Lambert Watterlos: 'Annales Cameracenses', ed. G. H. Pertz, in MGHS, 16, p. 547. For 1187 and after, see, for instance, *Gesta regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 49 (London, 1867), 2, pp. 10, 12, 16, 20, 37, 41, 93, 95–6, 170, 171 (recording events as news reached him); Ralph of Diss, *Ymagines historiarum*, in *The Historical Works of Master Ralph of Diceto*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 68 (London, 1876), 2, pp. 70, 79 (recording events as news reached him); Gervase of Canterbury, *Chronicle of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, in *Opera historica*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 73 (London, 1879–80), 1, p. 374 (probably written soon after news reached him); Ambroise, *L'Estoire de la Guerre Sainte, histoire en vers de la troisième croisade*, ed. Gaston Paris (Paris, 1897), *passim* (writing in the early thirteenth century); Arnold, Abbot of Lubeck, 'Chronica', ed. B. Lappenberg, MGHS, 21, p. 168 (writing in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century); Robert the Canon of Auxerre, 'Chronicon', ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGHS, 26, pp. 250, 253 (writing before 1121).

³⁹ Lawrence, pp. 165–9.

⁴⁰ For the organization of the military orders in general see Alan Forey, *The Military Orders from the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1992), pp. 148–74; for the responsions, see p. 128.

to the memory of her family. Margaret's actions during the course of proceedings suggest that she was determined, resourceful, or even rash, but not foolish. It is more likely that in emphasizing her *simplicitas* Margaret was trying to undermine the validity of her donation, while disguising the real cause of the dispute.

For more plausible causes of the dispute we must go forward in time to the papal letters of April 1236 that retrospectively set out the case in detail. On 12 April 1236 the pope recorded that the Hospitallers accused Margaret of laying hands on the spiritualities of the monastery, and acting as prioress.⁴¹ In a letter of 28 April we learn that the post of prioress had been vacant for six years and more.⁴² Apparently the prioress had died in around 1230; and the Hospitallers claimed that Margaret de Lacy had been exercising the rights she considered due to her as founder and patron of the house, acting as prioress and treating the property of the house as her own, until a new prioress was elected.

In his letter of 28 April 1236 the pope described the sad state of Aconbury priory.⁴³ His information came from the subprioress and the sisters of Aconbury who supported Margaret de Lacy's attempt to remove the house from the Hospital's control and put it under the Augustinian Rule. It would be reasonable to deduce that their grievances were also Margaret's grievances against the Hospitallers.

Aconbury priory, the pope wrote, had been gravely damaged in its worldly and spiritual affairs. The subprioress and the sisters had been without a prioress for six years because the Hospital had impeded a free election by trying to force their choice of prioress on the sisters (the superior of each of the Hospital's houses was normally chosen by the Master and Chapter, not by the brothers or sisters of individual houses; [some houses had the right to choose their own superior, but there is no evidence that Aconbury had been given this right]).⁴⁴ A priest whom the Hospital had appointed to hear the sisters' confessions and dispense the sacraments had been acting in a shameful manner and the sisters had turned against him. The brothers had taken some annual revenue from the house (this is probably a reference to the annual resposion, but could also include additional exactions).

The crucial complaints here are those that the Hospital was trying to exert undue control over the house and had taken so much revenue from the house that it had

⁴¹ *CH*, 2, no. 2138; *RG*, 2, no. 3103; *CPRPL*, p. 152.

⁴² *CH*, 2, no. 2140; *RG*, 2, no. 3123; *CPRPL*, p. 153.

⁴³ *CH*, 2, no. 2140; *RG*, 2, no. 3123; *CPRPL*, p. 153.

⁴⁴ [Forey, *The Military Orders*, p. 182, shows that the situation was more complex than has been thought in the past. The Hospitaller women's house of Sigena chose its own prioress: see *ibid.*, and García-Guijarro, Chapter 5, p. 139. In 1298 Beaulieu obtained the right of electing its own prioress: see Forey, *The Military Orders*, p. 182, and L'Hermite-Leclercq, Chapter 8, p. 213. At Buckland, the sisters chose the prioress, although the Prior of England chose the commander of the neighbouring commandery: Struckmeyer, Chapter 4, p. 95. See also Luttrell and Nicholson, Chapter 1, pp. 14–15, 21, 23, 41–42. However, it appears that the Hospital was claiming the right to select the prioress at Aconbury.]

been gravely damaged. By the 1230s the Hospitallers must have been trying the patience of their patrons. This was a difficult period for them. The lack of a ruling monarch in the kingdom of Jerusalem after 1225 had led to the military orders taking a larger political role in the kingdom, but without a corresponding increase in their resources.⁴⁵ The Fifth Crusade had been expensive and ultimately unsuccessful; the crusade of the Emperor Frederick II had been more successful in that Jerusalem had been recovered by treaty, but the Order had still incurred expenses that had to be met, while many of the Hospital's properties in Sicily had been confiscated by the Emperor Frederick II under his mortmain laws. Although Pope Gregory had interceded for the Order, pointing out that it lacked the resources to defend the Holy Land without these estates, the emperor did not return them until (possibly) 1239.⁴⁶ In 1227 the Hospitallers lost the hospital of Morment, given to them by the Bishop of Langres; it was transferred on papal order to the control of the chapter of Langres.⁴⁷ In 1234, on the intercession of the landgraves of Thuringia and with papal consent, the Hospitallers' prestigious hospital of Saint Francis of Marburg, burial place of the blessed Elizabeth of Thuringia, was transferred to the Teutonic Order.⁴⁸ In 1235, King Béla IV of Hungary confiscated the property of the Hospital and other religious orders in Hungary, because he was in desperate need of money.⁴⁹ As it was losing property in some areas, the Hospital had to compensate in others. It has been noted that nearly a third of the thirteenth-century grants to the Hospitallers in Essex were made during the 1230s;⁵⁰ clearly the Order was actively acquiring land during this period. In August 1235 Pope Gregory complained to the Hospitallers and Templars that 'already many are forced to believe that your principal concern is to widen your boundaries in the lands of the faithful' rather than to recover land from the infidel.⁵¹ Contemporaries had commented in the past on the Order's greed,⁵² but in the 1230s and 1240s the complaints became more frequent, indicating that the Order was exploiting its privileges as far as possible and using every possible means to acquire property. In the years 1240–45 the chronicler Matthew Paris complained that the Hospitallers swallowed up revenues as if they

⁴⁵ See Riley-Smith, pp. 163–83.

⁴⁶ *CH*, 2, nos 1973, 1975, 1976, 1982, 1986; *RG*, 1, nos 529, 545, 548, 635, 666; see Riley-Smith, pp. 173–4; *CH*, 2, no. 2230 of June 1239 may mark the return of at least some of the Hospitallers' confiscated properties.

⁴⁷ *CH*, 2, no. 1887; *RG*, 1, no. 161.

⁴⁸ *CH*, 2, no. 2008; *RG*, 1, nos 1998–9.

⁴⁹ *CH*, 2, nos 2135, 2182; *RG*, 2, no. 2917.

⁵⁰ *The Cartulary of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem in England, Secunda Camera, Essex*, ed. Michael Gervers (Oxford, 1982), p. xlv.

⁵¹ *CH*, 2, no. 2120; *RG*, 2, no. 2742.

⁵² For complaints from the 1180s see Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. M. R. James, C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983), pp. 68–72; other complaints are noted in Nicholson, pp. 71, 72, 82.

dropped them in the Great Abyss.⁵³ Neither these critics nor the nuns of Aconbury could appreciate the need for the Hospital's policies. As far as the nuns of Aconbury could see, the priory was being bled dry and must be rescued from this avaricious Order if it were to survive.

In short, it appears that the fundamental reason that Margaret de Lacy's relationship with the Hospital of Saint John ended in a bitter battle in the papal court was the Order's financial problems in the East, coupled to pressure from some European monarchs, which led to the Order applying increasingly tighter control and making increasing financial demands on its houses in Europe. At Aconbury, the nuns and their patron resented this control and these demands and saw them as such a danger to the survival of the house that the patron resolved to remove it from the Hospitallers' control. In this context, Margaret's claim that the Order could transfer her nuns overseas can be seen to make some sense, if it is interpreted as a garbled version of the Order's actual claims on them. Although it is unlikely that the Order would have wanted to transfer her nuns overseas, as relations between patron and Order deteriorated the Order would have made clear to Margaret that it was within its rights to do so. This is not to say that the fault was all on the side of the Hospitallers: for instance, the Hospitallers' complaints that Margaret herself was trying to exert undue influence over the priory could have had some basis in fact.

If the real reason for Margaret's decision to remove her foundation from the Hospital's control was the Hospital's financial demands and undue influence over the house, why did she make the unlikely claims that the pope originally listed in his letter of April 1233? This can be accounted for by the plaintiff's need to circumvent the legal privileges and influence of the Hospital and compensate for the legal weakness of her own position. As far as we can tell without the original charter having survived, she had given her foundation to the Hospital in due legal form, and it should not have been possible to revoke the donation. To make her position still more hopeless, the Hospital was well endowed with papal privileges, bestowed by successive popes to protect the Order against rapacious laity and clergy so that it could carry on unhindered with its valuable work in the Holy Land.⁵⁴ It had over a century's experience in protecting its interests in the law courts.⁵⁵ It was also, at least on parchment, a very wealthy order, owning extensive properties all over Europe, from Hungary to Ireland and from Sweden to Greece. What was more, the Hospital was very influential at the papal court. Members of the Order acted as papal chamberlains and held other posts that brought them into daily contact with the

⁵³ Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, RS 57 (London, 1872–83), 3, pp. 177–8; for the date, see Richard Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 59–60.

⁵⁴ The Order's basic privileges are listed in *CH*, 1, nos 30, 113, 122, 130 and 226; and see Riley-Smith, pp. 375–89.

⁵⁵ See James Brundage, 'The Lawyers of the Military Orders', in *MO*, 1, pp. 346–57.

pope.⁵⁶ In line with most large religious communities, in 1231 the Master of the Hospital had appointed a full-time representative at the papal court.⁵⁷ An outsider, no matter how wealthy and influential, would have little hope of defeating such an order in the papal court. Margaret's best chance of success was by arguing from a position of weakness, pleading ignorance and error and claiming that her original donation to the Hospital was invalid.

In order to consider how Margaret succeeded in winning her case, it is best to begin by tracing the course of the case in chronological order, using the detailed information provided by Pope Gregory IX's letters to his judges-delegate in England.⁵⁸ It is not certain when Margaret began her case against the Hospitallers. The first letter written by Pope Gregory IX, dated 8 April 1233, indicates that by this date the case had already been going on for some time. When Margaret first came to the papal court, the pope ordered the Bishop of Hereford, Hugh Foliot, to deal with the case; but the Hospitallers appealed to a papal privilege (first issued by Pope Anastasius IV in 1154), which stated that no one who had taken the cross of their Order could transfer to another Order, not even a stricter one. As I have shown above, Margaret's reply to this would have been that she had intended to put her foundation under the Augustinian Rule, and therefore no transfer was involved. She appealed to the pope to 'have mercy on her simplicity', overlook the Hospitallers' appeal and take whatever action was best for the nuns' souls, as all the women wished to do was to serve the Lord by following the Rule of Saint Augustine.⁵⁹

On 8 April 1233 Pope Gregory IX attempted to come up with a solution to satisfy both sides.⁶⁰ He instructed the bishop of Coventry that, if it could be done decently, then the sisters should be absolved from the Order of the Hospital and allowed to serve the Rule of Saint Augustine, although apparently the Hospitallers would retain a presence at the priory.⁶¹ If the presence of the Hospitallers made this solution

⁵⁶ Nicholson, p. 21; Riley-Smith, p. 380 n. 2.

⁵⁷ Riley-Smith, pp. 379–80; Sayers, p. 215.

⁵⁸ *CH*, 2, no. 2047 (8 April 1233), *RG*, 1, no. 1330, *CPRPL*, p. 134; *CH*, 2, no. 2059 (19 June 1233), *RG*, 1, no. 1422, *CPRPL*, p. 136; *CH*, 2, no. 2086 (23 June 1234), *RG*, 1, no. 2038, *CPRPL*, p. 141; *CH*, 2, no. 2138 (12 April 1236), *RG*, 2, no. 3103, *CPRPL*, p. 152; *CH*, 2, no. 2140 (28 April 1236), *RG*, 2, no. 3123, *CPRPL*, p. 153; *CH*, 2, no. 2167 (16 July 1237), *RG*, 2, no. 3780, *CPRPL*, p. 163.

⁵⁹ *CH*, 2, no. 2047; *RG*, 1, no. 1330; *CPRPL*, p. 134. Anastasius' privilege is *CH*, 1, no. 226.

⁶⁰ *CH*, 2, no. 2047; *RG*, 1, no. 1330; *CPRPL*, p. 134.

⁶¹ At the Hospitaller women's house at Buckland, Somerset, there was a house of 50 sisters in 1338, under a prioress, and a separate house for men which in 1338 had six brothers, one of whom was 'seneschal of the sisters': Larking and Kemble, p. 19. The pope's suggested arrangements for Aconbury suggests that a similar system was in operation here.

impossible, then the older sisters should be left at Aconbury to serve the poor and sick of the Hospital, and the rest moved to other monasteries. As there was no hospice at Aconbury, the pope presumably meant that the older sisters would be supporting the poor and sick of the Holy Land through their spiritual labours in England.⁶²

By 19 June 1233, however (the date of the next letter from the pope),⁶³ the Hospitallers had refused to accept this compromise. Circumventing Pope Gregory's mandate, they obtained a standard papal letter of protection, *Quoniam nimis dispendiosum*, which instructed named judges to defend the Hospitallers against those who injured them so that they did not need to appeal to the papal court. In this case the letter was addressed to the Prior of St Albans and his colleagues. The prior, on the ground that Margaret had been injuring the Hospitallers, summoned her to court three or four days journey outside her own diocese, and then, even though she had been ready to appear in court on the first citation, excommunicated her⁶⁴ and threatened her with a fine of £630 'for frivolous causes', as the pope put it. Claiming that they were not bound to travel so far nor to pay the fine, Walter and Margaret de Lacy appealed to the pope.

It is striking that although Margaret originally told the pope that her husband was not involved in the case, by June 1233 he was co-appellant with her and the pope actually identified him as co-founder of the priory with Margaret, apparently overlooking this contradiction.⁶⁵ However, under English common law, the husband ought to act with his wife when she brought an action over land, and whether or not Walter was a party to the original donation he could not avoid becoming involved.⁶⁶ Yet Walter de Lacy's involvement caused a further complication: as Walter had to spend a good deal of his time in Ireland he often could not attend court in

⁶² Pace Thompson, pp. 51–2, who suggests that there was a hospital at Aconbury, on the evidence of donation charters which mention the care of the poor and sick, this statement by the pope, and the fact that an early prioress was known as *magistra*. However, Hospitaller women's houses did not normally run hospices (Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers' Medical Tradition: 1291–1530', pp. 74–5) and donations to the Hospital routinely referred to care of the poor and sick, meaning care at the Hospital in Jerusalem or Acre, even when the military activities of the Hospital had become famous: for instance, *CH*, 1, no. 955 (King Richard I of England), 2, nos 1441 (Raymond Rupin, prince of Antioch), 1445 (Frederick II). Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, defines '*magistra*' simply as 'abbess of the order of St Augustine'. In the absence of more definite evidence, it seems unlikely that there was any hospice at Aconbury. Thompson admits that by the second half of the thirteenth century there was no mention of a hospital at Aconbury: p. 52.

⁶³ *CH*, 2, no. 2059; *RG*, 1, no. 1422; *CPRPL*, p. 136.

⁶⁴ A member of the laity who failed to appear before a Church court after being summoned three times would be excommunicated: Sayers, p. 75. However, as Margaret claimed that she had been ready to appear at the first citation, she had been treated unjustly.

⁶⁵ *CH*, 2, no. 2059; *RG*, 1, no. 1422, *CPRPL*, p. 136.

⁶⁶ Bracton, *De legibus*, iii.115, fol. 202b, and iv.335, fol. 429b.

England.⁶⁷ This might have been an advantage for the Lacys, enabling them to stall for time while their next appeal to Rome proceeded, but in fact played directly into the Hospitallers' hands. It was a common ploy of the Hospitallers and Templars to have their legal opponents summoned to a distant court to which the latter would be unable to travel by the appointed day, and then have judgement immediately decided against them for failing to appear. Pope Gregory rebuked the Templars and Hospitallers of Bordeaux and Tours on 22 April 1236 for this practice, and the same complaint was made against these orders by the men of Grimsby and Totnes during the royal inquests of 1274.⁶⁸

In the Aconbury case the Order pushed home its advantage ruthlessly. In June 1233 Pope Gregory instructed the Bishop, Prior and Archdeacon of Worcester to prevent the Prior of St Albans from proceeding with the case, as he had already instructed the Bishop of Coventry to deal with it.⁶⁹ However, in June 1234 the pope reported that although Margaret's representative had refused to proceed with the case against the Prior of St Albans and the Hospitallers on the grounds that Walter de Lacy was away in Ireland, the prior and his co-judges had interpreted this as contempt of court and awarded the Hospitallers possession of the priory at Aconbury. Despite the pope's instruction that the judges should not proceed with the case, they had excommunicated anyone who opposed the Hospitallers' custody of the house. On the Lacys' appeal, the pope instructed the Bishop of Coventry to revoke this sentence and to proceed with the case according to his earlier instructions.⁷⁰

On 12 April 1236 Pope Gregory recorded that since he had prohibited the Prior of St Albans from proceeding with the Hospitallers' case, the Hospitallers had taken another copy of *Quoniam nimis dispendiosum* to Richard, Prior of Westminster, and his co-judges.⁷¹ Margaret was again summoned for damaging the Order, because

⁶⁷ In December 1233, Henry III sent Walter de Lacy to Ireland on his business: *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1231–1234* (London, 1905), p. 352. Conversely, in November 1231, June 1232 and August 1233 Henry III wrote to his justiciar in Ireland to respite all pleas, except those specified, against Walter de Lacy in Ireland, as the king was retaining him in England in his service: *ibid.* pp. 7, 73, 254. The Curia regis rolls indicate that on previous occasions when summoned to court, Walter's failure to attend had deferred judgement for several years: *Curia regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III* (London, 1922–89): *plaint brought by the Bishop of Worcester*: 12, p. 110, no. 538; p. 253, no. 1245; p. 380, no. 1863; p. 498, no. 2501. *Plaint brought by William de Lacy*: 13, p. 453, no. 2258; 13, p. 380, no. 1811; p. 566, no. 2680; 14, p. 107, no. 542; 222, no. 1080. *Plaint brought by Simon Blund*: 15, p. 183, no. 863.

⁶⁸ *CH*, 2, no. 2139; *RG*, 2, no. 3116; *Rotuli hundredorum temp. Hen. III & Edw. I in Turri Lond. et curia receptae scaccarii Westm. asservati* (London, 1812–18), 1, pp. 83, 291, 401. Defendants were not supposed to be brought before judicial tribunals more than two days' journey from their own diocese: Sayers, p. 60 and note 6.

⁶⁹ *CH*, 2, no. 2059; *RG*, 1, no. 1422; *CPRPL*, p. 136.

⁷⁰ *CH*, 2, no. 2086; *RG*, 1, no. 2038; *CPRPL*, p. 141.

⁷¹ *CH*, 2, no. 2138; *RG*, 2, no. 3103; *CPRPL*, p. 152.

she had meddled with the spiritualities of Aconbury Priory by moving some of the sisters away from it. Margaret appealed again to the pope, claiming that *Quoniam nimis dispendiosum* did not give the judge the authority to proceed against her,⁷² and in any case she should not be summoned without her husband, who was jointly involved in the case with her and was still absent. The Prior of Westminster ignored her appeal and awarded the Hospitallers possession of the house.

The Hospitallers, acting on a legal pretext, then took a further copy of their papal letter of protection to the Prior of Rochester and his colleagues, authorizing him to proceed with the case. But when they proceeded to summon Margaret two days' journey outside her diocese, she replied that these letters did not have the authority to do this, and appealed to the pope again. The Hospital's legal manoeuvres, devastatingly effective against the burghers of Totnes and Grimsby and those of lesser means, were less effective against determined and wealthy opponents with the resources to make repeated appeals to the pope.

Margaret and her husband now humbly begged the pope to end the case, for it had dragged on for almost four years and cost them more than 600 marks, and they had no hope of ever getting a conclusion except by papal judgement. The pope ordered that, if the facts were as stated, everything was to be cancelled, and if Margaret's opponents had excommunicated her the sentence was to be revoked. All papal letters were to be produced, and the case was to be sent to the papal court. He suspended the English Hospitallers' privilege of not being summoned more than two days' journey from Clerkenwell, their chief English house.⁷³

In July 1237 Pope Gregory issued his decision. The sisters who wished to follow the Rule of Saint Augustine should be absolved from the Rule of the Hospital and professed as Augustinian canonesses. The pope blamed the English brothers of the Hospital for causing the problems and delays that had made the case drag on so long.⁷⁴

Why did the pope decide in Margaret's favour? There are several possibilities: firstly, he was impressed by her husband's power and authority; secondly, the pope was won over by Margaret de Lacy's sad story; or, finally, that he was acting in accordance with his own policies, and using Margaret de Lacy's case to further these policies.

Margaret and Walter's wealth and influence was certainly a vital factor in obtaining them a hearing at Rome and enabling them to carry on the fight, but gave them no guarantee of success. Although Walter de Lacy was a powerful and influential baron in Ireland and the Welsh March, his influence outside the British

⁷² For other such objections to the use of general mandates of this sort see Sayers, pp. 68–9.

⁷³ *CH*, 2, no. 2138; *RG*, 2, no. 3103; *CPRPL*, p. 152.

⁷⁴ *CH*, 2, no. 2167; *RG*, 2, no. 3780; *CPRPL*, p. 163.

Isles was less significant. It is unlikely that it would have impressed the pope. English royal influence could have had some sway with the pope, but Walter de Lacy was not one of Henry III's close favourites; there is no evidence that Henry III interceded with the pope on the Lacys' behalf, and it is unlikely that he would have done so.⁷⁵

It does appear from his letters that the pope was genuinely sympathetic to Margaret de Lacy. His emphasis on her 'simplicity' in his letter of 8 April 1233 indicates that he regarded her as a well-intentioned woman even though she was ignorant of the law, and deserving of papal mercy.⁷⁶ I suggest that Margaret and Walter deliberately misrepresented their case in order to win the pope's sympathy; Walter kept in the background, while Margaret claimed that she had acted naively and allowed the Hospitallers to persuade her into entrusting her new foundation to them without even consulting her husband as the law required.⁷⁷

However, Pope Gregory IX was not so gullible as to allow himself to be taken in by a litigant unless the case also suited his policies. In this case, he was concerned to

⁷⁵ Royal influence may seem far-fetched, but it is worth considering the possibility in some detail, given the close relationship between Henry III and Gregory's predecessor, Pope Honorius III. Henry had been a ward of the papacy while he was a minor, and Pope Honorius III had taken great interest in the young king's problems: for instance, see David Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), pp. 13–14, 142–3, 189–90, 301–2, 397–8. Walter de Lacy's service was valued by King Henry III. During the disturbances in Ireland of 1224–27, caused by Walter's brother Hugh, Walter was entrusted with custody of three important castles in Ulster: *Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III preserved in the Public Record Office, 1225–1232* (London, 1903), pp. 31, 47, 51, 75–8, 118. In November 1231, June 1232 and January and August 1233 Henry III retained Walter in England in his service, and in December 1233 sent him to Ireland on royal business: *Close Rolls: Henry III, 1231–1234*, pp. 7, 73, 182, 254, 352, 415. In November 1231 he sent Walter gifts of venison and wood: *ibid.* p. 4. Yet Walter de Lacy was not one of Henry's close favourites. Although Henry III confirmed his father's gift of three carucates at Aconbury in 1218, on 25 August 1227 he granted Aconbury wood to Hubert de Burgh, earl of Kent, including the part of the wood which belonged to the nuns of Aconbury by King John's earlier gift. The nuns did not recover their property until 22 December 1232, after the fall of Hubert de Burgh, when Henry reaffirmed his father's gift of three carucates: *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, 1226–1257*, pp. 58, 172; *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1227–1231* (London, 1902), p. 3. An inquisition into ownership of the woods was made in 1266: this is printed in Dugdale, *Monasticon*, 6.1, pp. 489–90. This does not indicate that Henry had any great concern to protect Lacy interests in this foundation.

⁷⁶ *CH*, 2, no. 2047; *RG*, 1, no. 1330; *CPRPL*, p. 134.

⁷⁷ If Margaret deliberately emphasised her 'weakness' to her own advantage, she was not the only medieval woman to do so: see Joan Fervente, 'Public Postures and Private Maneuvres: Roles Medieval Women Play' in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens GA and London, 1988), p. 227, on Christine de Pizan, Hildegard of Bingen and Hrotsvit: 'instead of rejecting the role of the frail, ignorant woman imposed on them by their culture, they embraced it and made it work for them'.

purify religious observance, and he feared that joint establishments for men and women, which his letter of 8 April 1233 indicates that Aconbury was, would lead to laxity and conflict. The pope's assertion that the Hospital of Saint John did not have houses for women also points towards a policy of separation of male and female houses. Sally Thompson has argued that by the end of the twelfth century the ecclesiastical hierarchy was making increasing efforts 'to ensure that communities of women were organized on a separate basis which would allow of no breath of scandal'.⁷⁸ There was justification for such concern; at the Hospitallers' house at Buckland, where there was a large house for sisters with a separate house for a small number of brothers, there was a long-running dispute between the sisters and brothers.⁷⁹

More specifically, the pope was also anxious to tame the arrogance of the Hospital of Saint John. In this he was following the policy of previous popes, notably Innocent III.⁸⁰ Later popes, such as Gregory X and Nicholas III, continued this policy.⁸¹ In April 1235, while the Aconbury case was being fought, Pope Gregory IX wrote to the Hospitallers and Templars rebuking them for their quarrels over mills in the Holy Land:

Perhaps it is a little thing to you that almost throughout the whole Christian world many cry out against you ... we have heard sadly and with sorrow that you, who are assigned as guards to the Holy Land ... seem to wish to lose it ... already many are forced to believe that your principal concern is to widen your boundaries in the lands of the faithful, although your intention ought to be to rescue the land consecrated by blood from the hands of the infidel.

Again, in April 1236, the pope rebuked the Hospitallers and Templars of the provinces of Bordeaux and Tours for their abuse of legal procedures.⁸² Although the military orders' legal abuses were not unique among religious orders, it was necessary that the military orders should be the most virtuous of all religious orders, because they were defenders of the Holy Land. The most common reason given by contemporaries for the failure of crusades was that God was punishing the sins of crusaders (*peccatis exigentibus*);⁸³ and as the military orders played a significant role in crusades any setbacks were also liable to be blamed on their sins. By

⁷⁸ Thompson, p. 213.

⁷⁹ Larking and Kemble, p. 19; Thompson, pp. 156–7 [and see Struckmeyer, Chapter 4, pp. 110–11].

⁸⁰ *Die Register Innocenz' III.*, ed. O. Hageneder and A. Haidacher (Graz and Cologne 1964–68), 1, no. 450; *CH*, 1, no. 1050; and see Nicholson, p. 29 and notes 113, 114.

⁸¹ Nicholson, p. 31; *CH*, 3, nos 3581, 3674; *Les registres de Nicolas III (1277–1280)*, ed. J. Gay, Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome (Paris, 1898–1938), no. 167.

⁸² *CH*, 2, nos 2120, 2139.

⁸³ Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading, 1095–1294* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 69–108.

November 1237 the pope was making active plans for a new crusade, but he was concerned that the success of the crusade might be hampered by the greed, idleness or other abuses of the Templars and Hospitallers. In March 1238 the pope wrote to both these Orders, rebuking them for their failings.⁸⁴ His impatience with the English Hospitallers would have been exacerbated by this anxiety to stamp out the Order's abuses.

The quarrel between Margaret de Lacy and the Hospitallers over Aconbury may appear insignificant at first glance, but in fact has wide implications for historians of the military orders in particular, and religious orders in general. Firstly, the case demonstrates the problems that the military orders were facing from their patrons in Europe at the same time as their responsibilities and problems were increasing in the Holy Land. Problems in the West were apparently exacerbated by the pressures in the East, as the financial exactions which the sisters of Aconbury complained of to the pope were made necessary by the Order's increasing military obligations in the East. If Margaret de Lacy had given her foundation to the Hospital purely to aid the Holy Land, such exactions might have been borne without complaint; but, as I showed above, her donation could have been influenced by a number of considerations, of which the need to help the Holy Land was by no means foremost. Her main concern, to judge from the concession by King John quoted at the beginning of this article, was to establish a house to benefit the souls of her parents and elder brother; and the Hospital's exactions for the Holy Land seemed likely to damage that intention.

The case also reveals the legal methods of the Hospital of Saint John, and shows that the Order used various tactics to undermine its opponents, bankrupt them or wear them down until they abandoned the case. The Hospitallers made effective use of the privileges granted to them by the papacy; brought in three different sets of judges to prosecute their case against Margaret in order to circumvent papal orders to judges not to proceed with the case as he had assigned it to others; and had Margaret summoned to attend court far outside her own diocese, excommunicated and fined a large sum. They appear to have obtained general papal letters of protection from the papal chancery with an alarming ease; alarming, that is, for the efficiency of papal justice, as they then proceeded to use these general letters to thwart the pope's specific instructions relating to the Aconbury case. The Lacys refused to be browbeaten by the Hospitallers' tactics, and made at least five appeals to the pope; Margaret's first appeal, when the pope assigned the case to the Bishop of Hereford; the second, of April 1233, when it was assigned to the Bishop of Coventry; the third, of June 1233, when another aspect of the case was assigned to the Bishop of Worcester; the fourth, of June 1234, when it was assigned to the

⁸⁴ For the crusade, see *RG*, 2, nos 3933 (4 November 1237), 3934 (4 November 1337), 3991, 3998–9 (22 December 1237); for the pope's complaints about the orders' abuses, see *ibid.* 2, nos 4148, 4129 (9 March 1238), 4156 (13 March 1238); *CH*, 2, no. 2186.

Bishop of Coventry, and the fifth, of April 1236, when the pope ordered that the case was to be transferred to the papal court.⁸⁵

If the case reveals the papacy's inability in practice to control the legal activities of religious orders, it also demonstrates the concern of the papacy, and of Pope Gregory IX in particular, to stamp out such practices and tame over-powerful religious orders. Pope Gregory's letters in this case reveal his impatience with the English Hospitallers, who were misusing their privileges in order to thwart every attempt to do justice by the various judges appointed by the pope to oversee the case. In addition, the case demonstrates that a married woman could act on her own behalf in the papal court, even though Margaret de Lacy acted alone only in the first stage of the case, and after June 1233 acted with her husband.

Overall, the defeat of the Hospital of Saint John over its house at Aconbury demonstrates that religious orders, however privileged and influential, remained vulnerable in the face of opposition from a determined and resourceful patron.

⁸⁵ *CH*, 2, no. 2047 (8 April 1233), *RG*, 1, no. 1330, *CPRPL*, p. 134; *CH*, 2, no. 2059 (19 June 1233), *RG*, 1, no. 1422, *CPRPL*, p. 136; *CH*, 2, no. 2086 (23 June 1234), *RG*, 1, no. 2038, *CPRPL*, p. 141; *CH*, 2, no. 2138 (12 April 1236), *RG*, 2, no. 3103, *CPRPL*, p. 152. For the appointment and choice of papal judges delegate, see Sayers, pp. 109–18; for other religious houses making wide application of general papal mandates, see *ibid.* pp. 66–9.

Chapter 7

The Hospitaller Sisters in Frisia

Johannes A. Mol

Introduction

Although Frisia is not among the best-known Hospitaller settlement areas of Europe,¹ the Order of Saint John was amply represented in this narrow but long strip of autonomous coastal lands along the North Sea, and in about 1300 there were no less than 21 separate houses with a community of brothers. Many of these commanderies housed a community of sisters. In the fifteenth century the presence of *sorores* can be attested for at least 14 of these settlements, while for seven other houses there is no evidence that sisters did not live there. This strong representation of Frisian women in the Order of Saint John has so far escaped the attention of the experts. The surveys of Riley-Smith and Forey do not mention Frisia while Tommasi, in his paper on the double and mixed convents of the military orders, only mentions a single Frisian convent or religious house.² This is due in part to the unfamiliarity of Hospitaller scholars with the German and Dutch historiography.³ It is also the case that the Frisian Hospitaller sisters appeared even less frequently in the documents than their female colleagues elsewhere. Virtually all the houses in which they resided were ruled, until their dissolution, by men. Only in the house at Warffum was their emancipation so far advanced in the sixteenth century that it could be described in the visitation report of 1540 as a nunnery managed by a prioress. However, despite the limited and relatively late ‘visibility’ of the Frisian sisters of Saint John, the sources suggest that they made up the majority of the population of the Frisian houses early in the Order’s Frisian history.

¹ The Frisians spoke their own language, had their own laws and also cherished a shared tribal consciousness. In political respects, however, their habitat was fragmented, largely as a result of its geophysical structure: ‘Friesen, Friesland’, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 5 (Stuttgart and Weimar 1999), cols 970–76; B. H. Slicher van Bath, ‘The Economic and Social Conditions in the Frisian districts from 900 to 1500’, *A.A.G. Bijdragen*, 13 (1965), 97–133.

² Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St John in Jerusalem and Cyprus c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), p. 241; Forey, Chapter 2; idem, *The Military Orders. From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1992); Tommasi, Chapter 3, p. 83.

³ It is regrettable that Johanna Maria van Winter in the introduction to her *Sources Concerning the Hospitallers of St John in the Netherlands, 14th–18th Centuries* (Leiden, 1998), focused on Utrecht and Holland and excluded virtually all works on the Frisian houses.



Fig. 7.1 Houses of the Order of St John and of the Teutonic Order in Frisia

We will consider below whether the Frisian houses should be called double convents, that is houses with both male and female communities, or women's convents under male direction. In any case, the figure of 21 gains significance if we remember that it amounts to a quarter of all the religious houses founded in Frisian lands in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, leaving aside the establishments of the mendicant orders. In about 1300 the entire religious landscape of Frisia consisted of some 82 institutions. Five of them were populated by Augustinian canons, 15 were Benedictine, 14 belonged to the Order of Cîteaux and 24 to that of Prémontré. The Hospital apart, the remaining two houses belonged to the Teutonic Order, whose organization strongly resembled that of the Order of Saint John. The majority of these 82 convents housed a community of women. The total number of women's convents cannot be determined exactly, but was probably around 50. If we keep to that figure for the sake of convenience, and if we really can establish that the 21 Hospitaller houses in Frisia each accommodated a community of sisters, we must conclude that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Order of Saint John had under its protection two-fifths of the houses to which women could go if they wished to live a religious life. That is a remarkable fact, not least because the Order of Saint John was not noted as a haven of refuge for women.⁴

Why did the Frisian Hospitallers open the doors of their houses to women religious or, considering the question from another viewpoint, why did so many Frisian women choose a spiritual life under the protection of Saint John? These questions are easier to ask than to answer. In this article I hope at least to take a step towards an answer by considering how the convents in question were organized and what changes in their structure occurred over the course of time. I will also take the occasional glance at the situation in the neighbouring double convents and women's convents of the other orders, in the conviction that the regional superiors of the Order of Saint John did not organize their Frisian houses in consultation with the central leadership in Acre or Rhodes. They seem rather to have responded to social pressure from their surroundings, based on local customs and expectations. The aim of this article is, therefore, not only a better understanding of the organizational flexibility of the Hospitallers in a unique, non-feudal region but also to throw more light on the development of female religious life general.

A serious handicap is the lack of sources. Many of the archives of the Frisian houses of Saint John did not survive the turmoil of the Reformation period. Particularly for the East Frisian convents and those that lay in the Frisian part of the County of Oldenburg, little written material has survived, a result of their early

⁴ The Rule of the Hospitallers made no mention of *sorores*. Forey, Chapter 2, p. 52, finds that in general no single military order had 'more than a handful' of women's houses. In 1237 Pope Gregory IX could even state that it was not the practice of the Order of the Saint John to have houses for women: 'in ordine Hospitalis ipsius non consueverit fieri collegium dominarum': *CH*, no. 2167. See Nicholson, Chapter 6, p. 163.

dissolution.⁵ All that has come down to us are a few dozen charters from the large and relatively well-endowed Saint John's convents in what is the present-day Dutch province of Groningen, most of which date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; only a few texts are older than 1400. There are also the well-known visitation reports from 1495 and 1540, although these contain few details for the Frisian houses.⁶ This subject requires a cautious, retrospective approach with a great deal of support from comparison and reasoning.

Central to this survey are the best-documented houses, Warffum, Wijtwerd and Oosterwierum, located north and east of the city of Groningen. Their composition and development will be considered below. Then an effort will be made to position the scattered data from the other Frisian commanderies within the overall picture.

The Series of Foundations

Two charters from 1317 and 1319 mentioned almost all the Frisian Saint John's settlements that appeared in later documents. That of 1317 was related to the Hospitaller house of Sneek (*Snake*), which was situated in the Friesland west of the river Lauwers, within the Diocese of Utrecht,⁷ and was the only house that was subject to Saint Catherine's convent at Utrecht. The charter of 1319 listed a total of 20 in the Frisian areas in the Dioceses of Münster, Bremen and Osnabrück.⁸ Together these 21 houses formed an apparently unique administrative area, which did not come under the authority of its own Frisian superior but was subject to the Commander of Steinfurt in Westphalia, who therefore in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries occasionally bore the title of *magister* or *balivus domorum per Westphalam et Ostfrisiam* (the Master or *Balier* of the houses in Westphalia and East Frisia).⁹

⁵ See Heinrich Reimers, *Die Säkularisation der Klöster in Ostfriesland* (Aurich, 1906), and Hermann Goens, *Die Einziehung der Kirchengüter während der Reformationszeit im evangelischen Gebiet des Herzogtums Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1927).

⁶ The list of 1367 does not mention the Frisian houses: Karl Borchardt, 'Urban Commanderies in Germany', in *La Commanderie: Institution des Ordres Militaires dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Anthony Luttrell and Léon Pressouyre (Paris, 2002), pp. 297–305: here pp. 297–8; *idem*, 'Soll-Zahlen zum Personalstand der Deutschen Johanniter vom Jahre 1367', *Revue Mabillon*, 75 (2003).

⁷ *Groot Placaat en Charterboek van Vriesland*, 1, ed. G. F. thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlansberg (Leeuwarden, 1768), pp. 157–9.

⁸ *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, ed. E. Friedländer, 1 (Emden, 1878), no. 48; *Oorkondenboek van Groningen en Drenthe*, ed. P. J. Blok et al., 1 (Groningen, 1896), no. 264.

⁹ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these Frisian houses were represented by a *commissarius Frisiae* who was commander of one of them and, as such, more representative of Frisian interests as *primus inter pares* vis-à-vis the Commander of Steinfurt, who as master of the houses in Westphalia and (East) Frisia sometimes also bore the title of *Friesische Meister* (master of Frisia): G. F. Noordhuis, *De Johanniters in Stad en Lande: Geschiedenis*

These houses are shown on the map (fig. 7.1).¹⁰ The list of 1319 starts with Warffum, Wijtwerd, Oosterwierum (*Aesterwerum*) and Goldhoorn or Finsterwolde (*Fynserwald*) in the Ommelanden, which lay within the area of the modern Dutch province of Groningen. Then come Dünebroek or Wymeer (*Wymaria*) on the present-day German-Dutch border, Jemgum (*Gemmegum*) on the west bank of the Ems, Hesel (*Holse*), Hasselt (*Harsle*) and Boekzetel (*Bowkesete*), east of the Ems estuary, and Abbingwehr (*Abbyngearve*) in Emsingo. Then we travel east, to the houses of Burmönken (*Bure*) and Tjüchermönken (*Thyuchen*), close to each other at Wittmund, the house of Havermönken (*Hove*) north of Varel, which vanished in 1511 in the newly formed Jade estuary, and the commanderies of Witleke (*Wyckleesen*) and Langewick (*Langewisch*) in the Butjadingen part of Rüstringen, which were likewise washed away but later rebuilt at Roddens and Inte.¹¹ Then the compiler of the list turns back west through the south, over Bredehorn (*Vredehorta*) in Ammerland, Burlage (*Buyrle*) in Overledingerland, Bokelesch (*Bokeleske*) in Saterland, and Langholt and Muhde (*Lethemuda*), also in Overledingerland.¹² Several of these houses of Saint John were later combined. After 1319 only three new commanderies were founded: Oosterwijtwerd in Fivelgo, Heiselhusen in Emsingo and Strückhausen in the Bremen Stadland on the lower Weser.

Due to a lack of sources, we are poorly informed about the founding of the houses mentioned in 1317 and 1319. The oldest reliable date for the existence of a Frisian Hospitaller commandery is 1284, the year in which the Bishop of Münster bought and transferred a portion of the Frisian goods of the Benedictine Abbey of Werden to the Commander of Steinfurt for his houses in Warffum and Jemgum. But because the same Steinfurt commander was asked in 1276 to help resolve a serious conflict between the Bishop of Münster and four Frisian *terrae*, he must have controlled all interests in this area at the time. Although many older authors assumed a connection with Frisian participation in the thirteenth-century crusades,¹³ historians of the Order made no positive statement on the subject until recently. The year 1270 has been cited as the earliest date for the Hospitallers' presence in the Frisian lands.¹⁴

van de Johannieters in de provincie Groningen (13de–17de eeuw) (Warffum, 1990), pp. 24–5.

¹⁰ For the identification of these houses, see Enno Schöningh, *Der Johanniterorden in Ostfriesland* (Aurich, 1973), p. 14.

¹¹ On these commanderies in Oldenburg Frisia, see W. Hayen, 'Die Johanniter in Oldenburg', *Oldenburgisches Jahrbuch*, 4 (1895), 1–36; here p. 6; Ludolf Ammermann, 'Witleke, Langewische, Roddens, Inte. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung der Johanniterkommenden Roddens und Inte', *Oldenburger Jahrbuch*, 72 (1972), 23–37; R. Schäfer, 'Die Johanniterhäuser in der Grafschaft Oldenburg um 1500', in *Johanniter im Nordwesten: Zur Geschichte des Johanniterordens im nordwestlichen Niedersachsen*, ed. E. Koolman and U. Elerd (Oldenburg, 1999), pp. 23–32.

¹² Only for the last does the list lack logic: Bokelesch should have been named before the houses of Burlage and Langholt, which were situated close to each other and later united.

¹³ For example Hayen, pp. 4–5.

¹⁴ Schöningh, pp. 11–13; Noordhuis, p. 22.

In connection with the crusades, that year would match the reports about the assistance that Ommeland and East Frisian crusaders were said to have offered to the French King Louis at Tunis. But their expedition was only the last in a whole Frisian series, which undoubtedly reached its highpoint in the Fifth Crusade of 1217 to 1221.¹⁵

That some Frisian houses of the military orders were indeed established before the middle of the thirteenth century can be deduced from a record of 1243 mentioning a house of the Teutonic Order at Nes in Westerlauwers Friesland. Because the nearby Hospitaller house of Sneek was founded at a more central location, a location also much better endowed than that of Nes, there is reason to assume that it was founded at least at the same time if not earlier.¹⁶ This would move the *datum ante quem* to the start of the 1240s. It has also been established that a number of the Frisian commanderies under Steinfurt were established before 1240.¹⁷ In that year, Brother Hendrik of Steinfurt, who was at the time in charge of the Order of Saint John's affairs in the Diocese of Utrecht, put the title *prior Steverdie et [F]risie* on his seal. This official description shows that his administrative district by then consisted of the Steinfurt commandery and a group of houses and possessions in Friesland. It is difficult to say exactly which houses belonged to this group, but the core probably consisted of the relatively well-endowed commanderies of Warffum, Wijtwerd, Oosterwierum, Jemgum and Abbingwehr.

The enthusiasm for the crusades propagated in the Frisian lands by preachers such as Oliver of Cologne (d. 1227) and Jan of Xanten undoubtedly played an important role in the bestowal of grants on the Hospitallers. Over the course of time, crusade vows could be commuted into gifts to the military orders. Yet this was presumably not the only reason why the Hospitallers were favoured. Heidrun Wiesenmüller recently showed that, of the older Benedictine convents in East Friesland, at least one – Bredehorn – was transferred to the Order of Saint John.¹⁸ Bredehorn figures in the *Dialogus miraculorum* of the Cistercian monk Caesarius of Heisterbach as a Benedictine convent,¹⁹ while in 1319 the convent stood on the records as a Hospitaller house. As the story in question must have been recorded

¹⁵ On Frisia and the crusades in general, see Herbert Brassat, *Die Teilnahme der Friesen an den Kreuzzügen ultra mare* (Berlin, 1970).

¹⁶ Johannes A. Mol, 'De Johanniters fan Snits: nammen, komôf en karriêres', *Fryske Nammen*, 10 (1996), 117–54: here 125.

¹⁷ *Idem*, 'The Beginnings of the Military Orders in Frisia', in *MO*, 2, pp. 307–17: here pp. 311–12.

¹⁸ Heidrun Wiesenmüller, 'Die ersten Klosterbewohner von Bredehorn. Benediktiner und Johanniter zwischen Weser und Ems', *Emder Jahrbuch*, 77 (1997), 41–51: here 42.

¹⁹ Caesarius regularly accompanied his father-abbot on the abbot's visitations to the north, thus amassing the material for his stories: J. J. van Moolenbroek, 'Caesarius van Heisterbach op reis in Friesland en Groningen, De "Dialogus miraculorum" (1219–1223) als historische bron', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 98 (1985), 513–39: here 514–17, 520.

when Caesarius was writing in 1220, Bredehorn must have changed orders between 1220 and 1319. Bredehorn was not the only Frisian Benedictine convent that changed to another order in the thirteenth century. In 1216 the East Frisian Benedictine double monastery of Meerhusen (*Merosa*) asked the Cistercian general chapter for admittance into that Order, with the result that it was split into a women's and a men's convent, of which the latter began in 1228 to serve as a Cistercian abbey under the name *Schola Dei* or Ihlow.²⁰ The same happened in the years 1247–59 to the Benedictine monastery of Menterwolde in the Ommelanden.²¹ There, too, the men and women were physically separated before they were allowed into the Order of Cîteaux. In short, in this period different Benedictine communities in the Frisian lands sought to link up with a well-organized order. Economic motives undoubtedly played an important role in this. Wiesenmüller suggested in addition that the ample privileges of the Cistercians and the Hospitallers exercised a force of attraction on the non-exempt Benedictine communities.²²

Fratres et Sorores: the Composition of the Convents

Bredehorn and the Benedictine double monasteries confront us immediately with the problem of the composition of the Hospitaller convents. Caesarius' story about the time spent in purgatory by a sister who was seduced by a cleric in a grange of her convent, became pregnant and died in childbirth, states that she was a nun in a Frisian cloister of the Benedictine Order, called Bredehorn: 'sanctimonialis in quodam claustris Frisiae nigri ordinis, quod Bredehorn vocatur'.²³ Because *sanctimonialis* generally indicates a choir-nun,²⁴ it may be concluded from this passage that the house of Bredehorn originally accommodated a community of religious women devoted to the singing of the canonical hours.

The document of 1319 referred to houses and convents (*domus et conventus*) as if to suggest that a conventual community was linked with every house. That *conventus* must be considered as plural in this text is evident not only from the words used, for example, *aliam [literam] habent conventus*, but also from the content. The document was drawn up by five arbitrators to settle a protracted argument about the mutual rights and duties of the Commander of Steinfurt on the one hand and, on

²⁰ Hajo van Lengen, 'Geschichte und Bedeutung des Zisterzienser-Klosters Ihlow', in *Res Frisicae: Beiträge zur ostfriesischen Verfassungs-, Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte* (Aurich, 1978), 86–101: here 87–8.

²¹ A. Willebrands, 'De St.-Benedictus abdij te Menterwold', *Cîteaux in de Nederlanden*, 7 (1956), 215–23: here 215–17.

²² Wiesenmüller, pp. 47–51.

²³ Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. J. Strange, 2 vols (Cologne, 1851), dist. XII, cap. 26, pp. 337–8.

²⁴ W. Nolet and P. C. Boeren, *Kerkelijke instellingen in de middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam, 1951), p. 399.

the other, the commanders and the convents of 20 Hospitaller houses in Friesland.²⁵ The most important decisions of the three clerical and two lay arbitrators were that the Commander of Steinfurt might demand no *exactiones* from the persons whom the Frisian commanders admit into their houses; and that the Commander of Steinfurt should grant to the brothers of each of the houses of St John in Frisia the right to elect their own commander, with the proviso that the election should always follow a canonical procedure involving the *maior pars* of the brothers.

But who made up the population of these convents? At first sight, the assignment to brothers alone of the right to elect a commander creates the assumption that these were communities of men. Judging solely from the appearances of the Frisian Hospitallers and their houses in the surviving texts of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, this might appear to have been the case. The Commandery of Warffum, for example, was represented in Hamburg in 1290 by the *fratres cruce signati de Verfum in Frisia*. More than 100 years later, in 1399, a legal transaction for the commandery was concluded by the *fratres Syeko, commendator, Uteko, cellerarius, totusque conventus in pratis Werphum*.²⁶ In 1456 there were charters issued on behalf of the convent on a similar matter: 'heer Hendrick commelduer, heer Jacob, prior, Popko, kelner, unde gemene oldermans unde brothers des cloesters to Werphum'.²⁷ The title *heer* (sir) was reserved for priests, while the term *oldermans* is a Middle-Dutch translation of the Latin *seniores*.

Yet we know from the visitation reports of 1495 and 1540 of the Priory of *Alamania*²⁸ that there was in fact a house of Hospitaller sisters at Warffum, with many literate sisters who wore the habit and the cross of the Order.²⁹ In 1495 it was said to be a house under the management of a priest who was the commander with two chaplains and a population of about 60 professed nuns who read and sang all the canonical hours. In 1540 the administration was in the hands of a prioress while in the whole chapter there were no less than 80 professed nuns who wore the habit and cross. It was further said of them that, on their admittance, a dowry (*dos*) was paid by

²⁵ Mol, 'Beginnings', pp. 314–16. The remaining Frisian house, Sneek, was subject to Saint Catherine's convent of Utrecht rather than the Commander of Steinfurt.

²⁶ Rijksarchief in Groningen (RAGr), Archief klooster Wijnward, inv. no. 5 (reg. 19).

²⁷ RAGr., Archief klooster Selwerd, inv. no. 1 (cartulary), fol. 119.

²⁸ For the background of the Priory of *Alamania* and its relations to the *Balieu* of Westphalia and Utrecht, see Anthony Luttrell, 'The Hospitaller Province of *Alamania*', in *Ritterorden und Region – politische, soziale und wirtschaftliche Verbindungen im Mittelalter*, ed. Z. H. Nowak, *Ordines militares colloquia Torunensia Historica*, 8 (Torun, 1995), pp. 21–42.

²⁹ Van Winter, *Sources*, p. 477 (1495): 'Werffung, in quo est preceptor frater Rodolphus the Lage, qui habet secum duos cappellanos ordinis sancti Johannis, et circa sexaginta moniales ordinis sancti Johannis, que legunt et cantant omnes horas canonicas'; pp. 520–21: 'preceptorie the Vorffen, ubi resident virgines moniales ordinis sancti Johannis'. The visitation bull was addressed to the 'religiosa domina Geburgia priorissa dicte preceptorie, cum toto capitullo virginum monialium in numero circa octuaginta, portantes mantellum et crucem dicti ordinis santi Johannis'.

their relatives, according to their means.³⁰ The male element was then represented by the priest-brother Herman van Deventer. Because he was no longer called commander it might appear that he had officially lost this status, yet in many documents dated before 1540 Brother Herman van Deventer was entitled Commander of Warffum, as was his successor.³¹

It is very clear that from approximately 1500 their official documents showed the sisters as increasingly active for their convent, and so to the outside world they appeared to be involved in the decision-making process for legal transactions. Reference to a charter from 1533 will suffice as illustration. In it a legal question was settled by 'Hermannus van Deventer, commenduyr, heer Ebele, curatus tot Stisquart, her Luytken Ennynge, her Otto Moer, heer Henrick Rosendal, ordenspresters, juffer Gebbe Nannynge, priorinne, myt den gemenen convente tot Warffum'.³² Mentioned along with the commander and four priest-brothers, including the pastor of Stitswerd, were the prioress and convent of sisters. In later documents we sometimes find the *suppriorinne* mentioned, with a *kellersche* or female cellarer, and the *senioerschen*, or senior sisters. In short, as time passed, there slowly emerged from the written documents the contours of a complete convent of sisters with a relatively small contingent of priests and *conversi*.

Precisely the same development can be traced for Wijtwerd. In 1304, 1347 and 1402 the community of this commandery was presented to the outside world as consisting of the 'preceptor casu quo commendator et fratres domus hospitalis sancti Johannis Jerosolimitani in Witwerth'.³³ The first mention of sisters came only in 1455, but from the description it can also be surmised that they were part of the convent community. Literally, this involved the commander and the 'ghemene convents broedere unde sustere des huses to Wijtwerth' (all the people of the convent of brothers and sisters of the house of Wijtwerd).³⁴ The visitation report of 1495 presented more details of the composition of the convent. It comprised, along with the commander and a chaplain, 15 women of the Order, *mulieres ordinis sancti Johannis*, who read and sang all the canonical hours.³⁵ In 1537 it was reported of two *jufferen* that they were *geprofessyde susteren*, that is, professed sisters, nuns who had taken full religious vows.³⁶ Three years later, the house of Wijtwerd was said to

³⁰ 'Dixit eciam pro quando recipiuntur virgines, parentes earum solvunt dotem secundum possibilitatem et quod peccunie exponuntur in censibus vel in aliis redditibus': *ibid.*, p. 522.

³¹ Among others, in 1508, 1514, 1531 and 1533. In 1545 he was apparently succeeded as commander by Brother Henricus Rosendael: Noordhuis, pp. 60–61.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³³ *Oorkondenboek Groningen and Drenthe*, nos 223, 403; RAGr., Archief klooster Wijtwerd, inv. no. 2.

³⁴ RAGr, Archief klooster Selwerd, inv. no. 1, fol. 118v (27 November 1455). Compare similar expressions in charters of 1464 and 1482: Noordhuis, p. 31.

³⁵ *Sources*, ed. Van Winter, p. 477.

³⁶ RAGr, Archief klooster Wijtwerd, inv. no. 23 (24 August 1537).

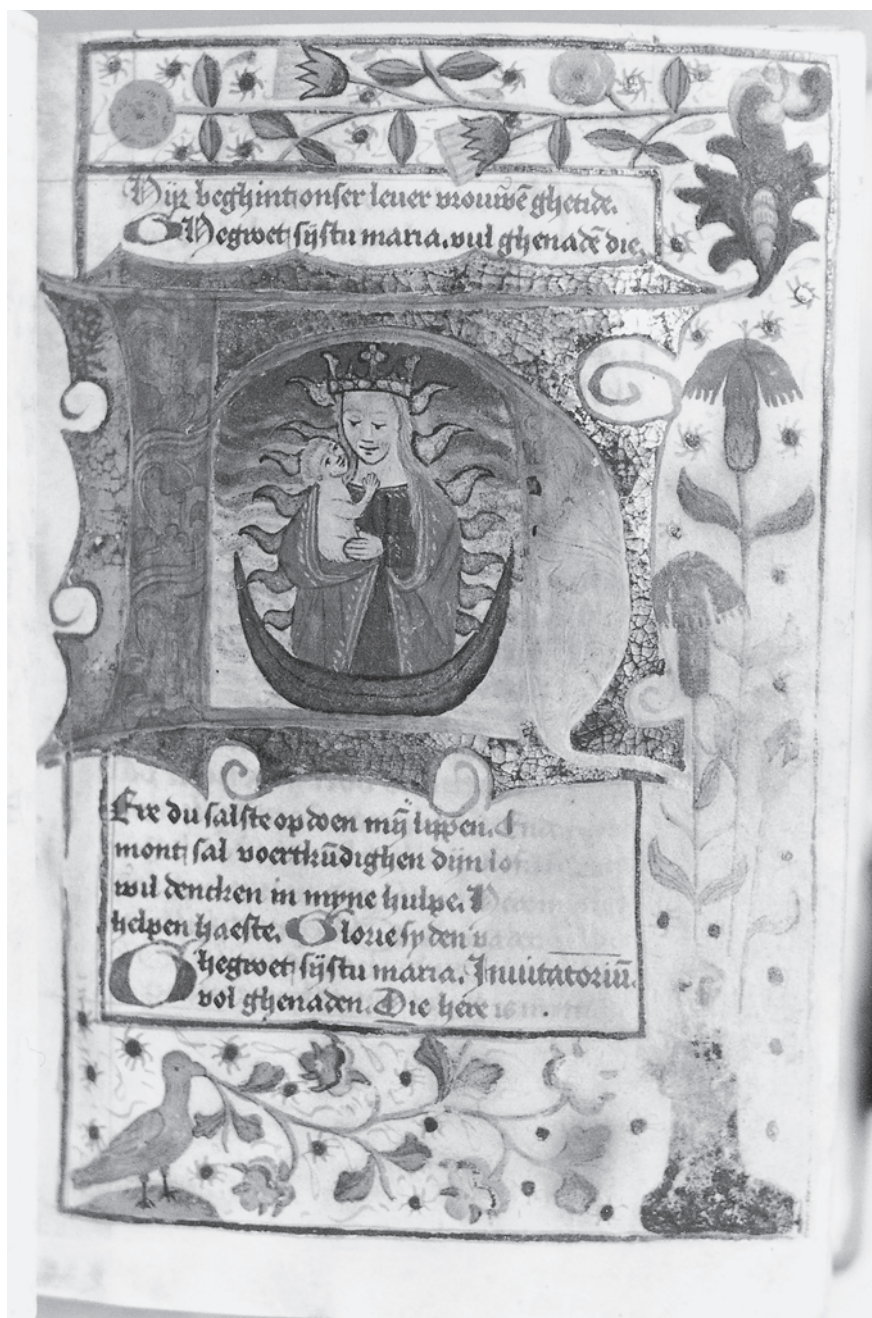


Fig. 7.2 Folio from a Book of Hours written in the vernacular by the Hospitaller sisters of Wijtwerd, 1505

accommodate religious *virgines* under the direction of a prioress, who worked with Brother Wolter de Gruningen who was *ipsius domus sacerdos et administrator* (priest and administrator of the house).³⁷ We know from other documents that the latter bore the title of commander. The visitors did not mention the number of nuns, only stating that there were fewer than in Warffum. They wore the cross and habit of the Order and were said to follow the same way of life as the sisters of Warffum. They also had the reputation of being chaste and very religious (*caste et religiosissime ... prout est fama*). According to tradition, the last nun of Wijtwerd, which was secularized in 1594, wore a cross on the right shoulder of her habit.³⁸ Also at Wijtwerd the female office holders such as the cellarer were only mentioned in the documents at the end of the sixteenth century.³⁹

If the sisters at Wijtwerd indeed participated fully in the convent in 1455, 1495 and 1540, we can then ask whether they were also implicitly included in earlier lists in which no sisters were mentioned but in which there was reference to otherwise unspecified 'members of the convent in general'. For example, in another charter from 1455 the following persons appeared: *heer* Johannes, commander and priest; *heer* Alle, pastor at Maarhusen; brother Auteko, cellarer; brother Poppeke, master smith; brother Johannes, shoemaker; brother Eppen, grange master at Wijtwerd; *heer* Lubbert, prior; brother Gheert Smit, cellarer; brother Haerd, grange master at Ernstheem, *en de gemene conventualen van Wijtwerd*.⁴⁰ A comparison of this list with the other from the same year shows that only the priests and other male *fratres* are listed by name. Although it is not certain that these nine comprised the total male population, it is conceivable. The nine comprised three priests (a commander, a pastor and a prior), and six lay brothers⁴¹ (two cellarers, two grange masters, a

³⁷ Van Winter, *Sources*, pp. 523, 526. For the rest, a total of 60 people are mentioned as having to be fed daily from the income of the house, apart from guests, passing beggars, soldiers and seasonal labourers who made a claim on the generosity of the sisters. This seems to indicate that the house, along with the community of choir-nuns, the resident servants and a small number of lay brothers and corrodians, also accommodated a number of lay sisters.

³⁸ F. Mijleman, 'Ommelands eer', in A. Pathuis, 'Het handschrift "Ommelands eer" van pater Franciscus Mijleman SJ. Missionaris der Ommelanden', *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Kerk in Nederland*, 7 (1965), 1–110; here 61.

³⁹ Noordhuis, p. 44.

⁴⁰ RAGr, Archief klooster Selwerd, inv. no. 1 (cartulary), reg. 149 (24 November 1455).

⁴¹ I am aware that the term lay brother is ambiguous, especially in a military order context, since technically all non-ordained brothers, including knights and sergeants, were lay. I use it here, however, in the sense of *conversus*, as it was applied to the lay brothers in the Cistercian, Premonstratensian and other monastic and canonical orders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Michael Toepfer, *Die Konversen der Zisterzienser* (Berlin, 1983); Louis J. Lekai, *Cistercians. Ideals and Reality* (Kent, Ohio, 1977), chapter XXI, 'Lay-Brotherhood'; and T. J. Gerits, 'Betekenis en spiritualiteit van de lekebroeders in de middeleeuwse observantie van Prémontré', in *Gedenkboek Orde van Prémontré 1121–1971* (Averbode, 1971), pp. 179–81. In the Frisian documents the Hospitaller *conversi*, who seem

smith and a shoemaker). It could be assumed that the three priests, the cellarers and the grange masters were listed only because of their official duties in the legal transaction, and that other brothers who did not hold office were omitted, but the inclusion of the smith and the shoemaker indicates that this was not the case. The same approach was adopted in an earlier document from 1430.⁴² First the *heren* (the priests) and brothers (lay brothers) were listed, each by name and office. Then came the group designation 'ende the meyne conventeslude to Wytwerth' (and all the members of the convent of Wijtwerd). In view of the information about the convent populations of 1495 and 1540, one must conclude that, in these cases, only the sisters could have been meant by the term *meyne conventeslude*.

Aside from the prominent presence of lay brothers as shown in these documents from 1430 and 1455, of which more will be said below, the title of *prior* given to *heer* Lubbert in 1455 is intriguing. Was he the leader of a separate conventual community of brothers not identified by name who were, as such, perhaps also responsible for the performance of the choir prayers, or was he simply the senior priest apart from the commander? It is important to ask this question. If the former were the case, Wijtwerd would have been a standard double monastery⁴³ with two separate communities, of which the male community was directed by a prior and the female by a prioress. The second case would be that of a woman's convent under male direction. Although there is no hard evidence to prove it, everything points to the second case. The second time that a prior is mentioned at Wijtwerd, in 1499, the commandery had the same small number of priest-brothers as in 1455: a transaction was concluded by the Commander *heer* Rodolphus Horenken, the Prior Gherardus, *heer* Tamme pastor of Maarhusen, and (brother) Hermen master baker with 'unsen gemenen capittelaren, preesteren, geleerden ende ungeleerden, bynnen ende buten, die stemmen mogen in onse convente';⁴⁴ that is, with all chapter members, priests, educated and uneducated, in residence or living away, who together have the right to vote in our convent. This situation fully corresponds with the inventory of 1495 when, apart from the commander, only one resident priest-brother was found at Wijtwerd. This priest can have been none other than the Prior Gherardus.⁴⁵ *Heer* Tamme was still part of the convent in 1495, true enough, but he was presumably

to have been accepted as fully professed brothers, were mostly called *broeders* or *fratres*, sometimes with the addition *laici*. See, however, a charter of 1320 from the Commandery of Sneek in which five *fratres conversi* are listed by name: Johannes A. Mol, *De Friese huizen van de Duitse Orde. Nes, Steenkerk en Schoten en hun plaats in het middeleeuwse Friese kloosterlandschap* (Leeuwarden, 1991), p. 254.

⁴² RAGr, Archief klooster Wijtwerd, inv. no. 12 (12 March 1430).

⁴³ St. Hilpisch, *Die Doppelklöster: Entstehung und Organisation* (Münster, 1928), p. 1.

⁴⁴ RAGr, Archief klooster Wijtwerd, inv. no. 1 (11 August 1499).

⁴⁵ He is in all likelihood the same as *Prior Gheert* and *heer Gherdt Kremer*, *stadtholder des conventes toe Wijwarden*, who occur respectively in the documents in 1504 and 1506: RAGr., Archief klooster Wijtwerd, inv. nos 109, 110.

absent from the roll call at the visitation because, as pastor of Maarhusen, he lived away.⁴⁶

All things considered, we can conclude that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and very likely in the fourteenth century as well, Warffum and Wijtwerd were not standard double monasteries with a male community, but women's convents in which choir prayer was sung by communities of nuns. These women's convents were under male leadership and had a contingent of lay brothers that gradually declined in number before the end of the fifteenth century.

Convents of Lay Sisters⁴⁷

Thus far, the picture is relatively clear. In 1495 and earlier there were at least two Hospitaller convents of choir-nuns in Frisia. They performed the same tasks as the convent of sisters of the Teutonic Order at Steenkerk in Westerlauwers Friesland, which as an *onderconvent* or sub-convent formed a unity with the neighbouring men's house of the same Order in Nes, and which, in about 1375, accommodated learned nuns of 'good parentage who could sing and recite the seven canonical hours and who prayed for the salvation of the good, that is well-to-do, deceased in the land'.⁴⁸ Steenkerk closed in the first half of the fifteenth century due to its poverty.

'Singing nuns' seem to have been present in the Hospitaller house of Sneek.⁴⁹ There is at least one persuasive indication that in the early-fifteenth century the convent on the *Mons S. Johannis* of Sneek housed a praying community of sisters along with a large number of priest-brothers and lay brothers. A 1432 charter spoke of a *soror ordinis Sancti Johannis*, Eelke Muringhe by name, who lived in the *monasterium* of the Order of Saint John in Sneek and for whom a parcel of land of some size was transferred to this monastery.⁵⁰ The family of Sister Eelke challenged the Hospitallers over the ownership of that land, so that three village pastors from

⁴⁶ We find the same composition on 19 July 1510, when Wijtwerd was represented by *heer* Wolter upten Dijck, commander, *heer* Johan Snelle, priest, *heer* Lambert Hagedoerne, brother Hermen *baker* and in addition by the convent members at Wijtwerd: RAGr., Archief Hoge Justitiekamer, reg. 55.

⁴⁷ 'Lay sister' is, like 'lay brother', a term with different meanings. As will become clear in the following pages, I use the term here to designate a *conversa* or sister who did not master Latin, often – but not always – as a result of an entry at later age, and who could not participate in choir prayer. Lay sisters therefore have to be distinguished from choir-nuns. We meet them in all monastical and canonical orders, mostly entrusted with domestic tasks, more or less as a female counterpart, although not as numerous, of the *conversi*. As for the 'classical' women's monasteries, there is not much information available on their status, social background, function and numbers.

⁴⁸ For further details of this convent, see Mol, *Friese huizen*, pp. 66–70.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Compare however Tommasi, Chapter 3, p. 83.

⁵⁰ Mol, *Friese huizen*, pp. 256–7.

the area had to serve as arbitrators to rule in the case. That it was not Eelke's intention to live in a men's monastery as a *consoror* or *familiaris* but actually to serve God as a nun in a women's community can be deduced not only from the size of her *dos* but also from her statement to the arbitrators that she wanted to renounce the world and stay in the *monasterium*, and thereto dedicated her goods, body and soul to God and Saint John. At that time the community of sisters at Sneek could no longer have been very large. By 1495 there were no longer any nuns at Sneek, so it may be assumed that the brothers had allowed the sisters' convent to die out in the interval by refusing admission to any new novices.

That the 1495 visitation report no longer mentioned sisters in the Frisian houses, except at Warffum and Wijtwerd, should thus not trouble us with regard to Sneek. It does however create a problem for most of the other Hospitaller settlements in Frisia. There are many reports about Frisian *sorores* that do not tally with the inventory made in 1495. Going through them briefly in chronological order, we come first to Abbingwehr in Emsingo, which in 1540 was called the richest house of the Order in East Friesland.⁵¹ In 1402 brothers and sisters of Saint John were mentioned there.⁵² That the sisters there were considered as conventuals is evident from a document of ten years later, in which a local nobleman transferred a piece of meadow to the commander and conventuals of Abbingwehr, with the stipulation that the commander and the brothers and sisters could rule that land henceforth wholly as their own property.⁵³ It is also clear from various other fifteenth-century documents that these sisters were among the conventuals of the house.⁵⁴ As we will see further on, sisters lived in Abbingwehr until the dissolution of the house by the Count of East Friesland in 1528. They were not led by a prioress but by a *suster moder*,⁵⁵ a *mater* or mother, in precisely the same way as at the sisters' convent at Steenkerk, belonging to the Teutonic Order in Westerlauwers Friesland, which had been reorganized in 1491 and had accommodated only lay sisters since that time.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Melior aliarum domorum*: Schöningh, p. 125.

⁵² *Den broderen ende zusteren to Abbingeweer of zunte Johannis leven: Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, 1, no. 188.

⁵³ 'dans ex hoc prelatie fratribus et sororibus et domino Nyttardo commendatori hereditatem possidendi, vendendi seu alienandi ... plenariam potestatem': *ibid.*, no. 232 (11 November 1412).

⁵⁴ See, for example, the details of the goods-lists of 1437 from the grange of Miedelsum, naming various parcels of land that were contributed by named sisters: *ibid.*, no. 469; and the statement of 'soror Encka the Grimassum, conventualis in loco prenominato', in 1457: *ibid.*, no. 674.

⁵⁵ Named in a 1526 letter of complaint in which a local pastor stated that 'broder Sunke and the suster moder met dy andere conventiskynderen' were well aware that he had enriched the convent with a considerable number of gifts in money and kind: Staatsarchiv Aurich, Rep. 1, no. 773.

⁵⁶ Mol, *Friese huizen*, pp. 138–40.

Another early report of sisters in a Frisian Hospitaller house related to the Commandery of Strückhausen, in the Bremen Stadland on the west bank of the Weser estuary. In 1423 the Hospitaller priest-brother Hilderyck made a statement on his deathbed regarding the foundation of a convent.⁵⁷ Before a large number of witnesses he said that, on his initiative and by permission of the parishioners, a certain property complex together with the ruined parish church of Strückhausen⁵⁸ should be transferred to God, Mary and Saint John the Baptist for use by and maintenance of ‘synen olden closterbroderen unde susteren ... de dat cruce dregen sunte Johannes ordens to Struckhusen, to godesdenste unde sunte Johannes unde to erer vodynge unde kledynge unde allen armen luden de ere alemysen begherende synt’ (his former cloister brothers and sisters ... who bore the cross of the Order of Saint John at Strückhausen, so that they could serve God and Saint John and to provide their food and clothing and enable them to give alms to the poor). He stipulated that this property should forever remain in the hands of the *kloester* of Saint John’s Order in Strückhausen. In other words, Strückhausen was considered by its founder as a convent, in which religious practice was maintained by brothers and sisters and where alms were provided for many poor people.

Similar fifteenth-century statements exist about brothers and sisters as residents of a convent at Havermönken (alias *thon Hovon*), Heiselhusen, Jemgum and Muhde. The first-mentioned house was said in 1443 to be a convent. Notably, it was not run by a commander but by a *provest* or *prepositus* named Volquerd. He transferred, with the permission of ‘alle unser brodere unde susters thon Hovon’ (all our brothers and sisters of Havermönken) a property of the convent to the Count of Oldenburg in order to obtain better protection for their house, in return for an annual interest in butter. The transaction was validated with the seal of the ‘domus sancti Johannis de Hovon’ (the house of Saint John of Havermönken).⁵⁹ Heiselhusen, on the west coast of Emsingo, was originally a grange of the Commandery of Goldhoorn at Finsterwolde in Groningerland. The settlement was declared to be an independent house by the *Balier* of Westphalia in 1446 at a meeting of all Frisian commanders. The intention was to put an end to discord between the commander and the convent of Goldhoorn on the one hand and, on the other, ‘her Acke ende de ghemene broders ende susters des huses to Heseldahusen’ (Father Acke and all the brothers and sisters of the house of Heiselhusen).⁶⁰ If Heiselhusen, originally a dependent house, already had a mixed population, then it may be assumed that this was the case at the motherhouse of Goldhoorn as well. For Jemgum, a 1477 report on the ownership of

⁵⁷ *Oldenburgisches Urkundenbuch*, ed. D. Kohl and G. Rütthning, 8 vols (Oldenburg, 1914–35), 2, no. 672.

⁵⁸ The church, according to a report in 1396, had indeed originally been dedicated to Saint John. It is not clear whether Hospitallers had been connected with it before its destruction in relation to a feud: *ibid.*, 2, no. 516.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 783.

⁶⁰ *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, 1, no. 573.

a certain parcel of land indicated that it was given to the convent by a certain sister Ocka, who had evidently been admitted there as a widow at a late age.⁶¹ At the time of the visitation of 1540 the building complex of the Commandery of Jemgum was uninhabitable due to war damage. The commander was traditionally obliged to maintain two other priests and six sisters, but there was no longer a commander. Only a priest-brother and two elderly sisters lived at the Jemgum grange of Holtgaste with its related parish church.⁶²

In Muhde on the Ems, which was named as a convent in so many words in 1439,⁶³ there were both brothers and sisters in 1490, when the priest-brother Herman Grone of Muhde left not only a bequest for requiem masses to be read by his fellow brothers but two tuns of Hamburg beer for the 'sisters and brothers' of the house as well. According to the visitation report of 1540, Muhde was usually inhabited by a commander, two priest-brothers and six sisters.⁶⁴ The visitors found only one priest and five old sisters with the commander. This community was assisted by ten labourers on the farm and six maids to take care of the sisters in the house.

For the other houses, the earliest information about the presence of sisters dates from the sixteenth century. Between 12 and 15 sisters were said to have lived in the Commandery of Dünebroek before the Reformation.⁶⁵ In a document of 1510 the commander, brothers and sisters of Dünebroek declared that they had always been good and loyal subjects of the Bishop of Münster and always would be. In 1540 eight old sisters still lived there along with the commander. They were assisted by four maids in the house and four labourers on the farm.⁶⁶ During the visitation the commander said that their number had once been higher. We may assume from this that the house of Oosterwijtwerd in Groningen, which had split off from Dünebroek in the fifteenth century, had been incorporated into the commandery of Oosterwierum in 1476 and had then been designated as both a *klooster* and convent, had also accommodated sisters.⁶⁷

Although the house of Oosterwierum was on record in 1495 as a commandery with six priest-brothers in addition to the priest commander, it did indeed harbour sisters in the decades thereafter.⁶⁸ In 1528 at least two sisters who had fled from Abbingwehr lived there: Wibbe Molners and Margarete Hinrekink.⁶⁹ The visitors of 1540 established that a priest-commander resided in Oosterwierum with 12

⁶¹ Ibid., no. 897.

⁶² 'Item habet allodium sive grangiam Holtgast ... in qua continue residet unus sacerdos cum duabus antiquis sororibus': Schönningh, p. 122.

⁶³ *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, 1, no. 508.

⁶⁴ Schönningh, p. 120.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁶ 'Item habet octo antiquas moniales et antiquo tempo erant plures': ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁷ Noordhuis, pp. 70, 115–16.

⁶⁸ *Sources*, ed. Van Winter, p. 477.

⁶⁹ Noordhuis, p. 56.

sisters who were not obliged to sing the canonical hours because they were not literate.⁷⁰ That these lay sisters were considered as members of the convent can be deduced from a document of 1516 in which Oosterwierum was represented by the Commander *heer* Clawes, the Prior *heer* Johan of Renen, the priest-brother Geert van den Dam and further on the *preesteren ende gemene conventualen*. The priest-brothers were listed alongside the conventuals, who obviously included other unnamed brothers; otherwise it would have made little sense to report them separately.

To complete the picture, there are data about Bokelesch and Hasselt. In Saterland in 1549, Bokelesch had a composition of personnel similar to that at Dünebroek.⁷¹ The commander and priest-brother *heer* Gheerdt admitted that his small convent was inhabited only by himself, a lay brother and ten *sorores*: Rycke, Gheeske, yet another Rycke, Hylle, Wybbecke, the physically handicapped (*pauper*) Talcke, Styne, Aleke, Anna and Wobbecke. The two brothers and ten sisters were served by nine labourers and maids, likewise named by name. 'We are all poor, and servants of all the poor', said the commander in a pious cry of distress at the conclusion of the registration, in order to prevent his house from being too heavily taxed by the Count of Oldenburg. Times were hard, of course, in the middle of the sixteenth century. This certainly applied also to the Commanderies of Hasselt and Burmönken, which were confiscated in 1528 and leased by Count Enno II of East Friesland to tenant farmers. According to the eyewitness testimony in 1566 of an old sister from Abbingwehr, Commander Berend Buther of Hasselt at that time married his concubine, a convent sister who was under his protection. Presumably, the exiled *begine* (beguine) of Hasselt, who received a sum of 12 Emden guilders in 1545 from Countess Anna in order to return to her fatherland, was the last member of the convent.⁷²

From all this evidence it appears that, apart from Warffum, Wijtwerd and possibly Sneek, most Frisian houses contained a number of priest-brothers and lay brothers, alongside a female population of either sisters or others whose status was not immediately apparent from their descriptions. For them only the designations *sorores*, *virgines* or *moniales* have come down to us. Only in relation to the sisters of Oosterwierum was it stated, in 1540, that they were unlettered lay sisters (*sorores laicae, indocte*). For some we know that they wore a cross on their habit. Regarding their material contributions we can clearly read between the lines that an admission gift was expected of them. In many sources, the institutions where they stayed were called monasteries or convents, each with a community of conventuals. Many texts pointed out that these sisters were considered to be part of the community by people

⁷⁰ 'Ubi residet comandator sacerdos cum duodecim virginibus monialibus laicis, quia non tenentur divina officia cantare horas canonicas, nam sunt indocte': *Sources*, ed. Van Winter, p. 531.

⁷¹ *Oldenburgisches Urkundenbuch*, 4, no. 873.

⁷² Schöningh, pp. 52–3.

in the area with whom their superiors concluded legal transactions. However, the foreign visitors who in 1495 gathered information about the Frisian houses in Steinfurt on behalf of the Order, but without paying a personal visit to them, did *not* consider such sisters, who did not have a command of Latin and so were unable to sing the canonical hours, to be fully professed members of the Order, and therefore left them unreported. The visitors evidently did this with the approval of the Commander of Steinfurt. In their eyes, the lay sisters did not have a fully professed status and were indeed not permitted such status. The report gives the impression that, outside Warffum and Wijtwerd, Hospitaller life in Frisia was a man's affair and was intended to stay that way.

The Reformation of Oosterwierum (1480) and Abbingwehr (1499)

The notion of masculine predominance did not penetrate deeply into the circle of Frisian Hospitaller houses until the years 1480–82 when the Commandery of Oosterwierum was subject to a *reformatio* or reorganization on the orders of the *Balier* of Westphalia and with the approval of the Frisian commanders.⁷³ A few informative documents about this *reformatio* have been preserved. The most important is an undated charter in which Bernt von Schedelich, *Balier* of Westphalia and Commander of Steinfurt, together with the convent of Steinfurt, laid down that the house of Oosterwierum would be reformed so that its residents would follow the rules and statutes of the Order in the same way as the houses in Strasbourg and Cologne. The first and most important consequence would be that 'the professed virgins and women of the Order living there at the moment will be sent to another house and that Oosterwierum will be a house of men of the Order from now on'.⁷⁴ The *Balier* could not call on priest-brothers from his own circle of commanderies to implement this proposal, so the management of the operation was put in the hands of Arnd Zekelhorn, pastor of the village of Haren situated just south of the city of Groningen. This outsider would be able to wear the habit of Saint John and would be admitted into the Order. He also had to assure himself of the support of two priest-brothers with experience in observing the way of life that was now to be enforced, who should preferably come from Cologne. This appears in a confirmation charter of 18 July 1486 drawn up by Schedelich's successor, Herbort von Snetlage, evidently to boost the reorganization then underway. That the original instructions should be dated around 1480 can be deduced from two other documents. The first is a surviving letter, dated 25 May 1481, from the burgomasters and council of the city

⁷³ On the following, see also Noordhuis, pp. 47–50.

⁷⁴ J. G. C. Joosting, 'Onuitgegeven pauselijke bullen verleend aan de Hospitaalbroeders van den H. Johannes te Jeruzalem', *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, new series, 1 (1902), 275–313: here 309–12.

of Groningen to their colleagues of Cologne, in which they ask them to ensure that two persons from the Hospitaller convent of Cologne are sent to the Hospitaller houses in the Ommelanden in Groningen 'to teach them the reformation'.⁷⁵ The second document is a transumpt or copy of authentic copies of a number of papal bulls in favour of the Order of Saint John. It was preserved in the archive of Oosterwierum but had been written in Cologne and, at the request of Hupert von Heinsberg, Commander of Cologne, it was confirmed on 15 June 1480 in his own Commandery of Cologne by the deacon of Saint Martin's church of Kerpen in the presence of several witnesses.⁷⁶ The transumpt shows every sign of having been especially composed to be of service in the reform work of the two above-mentioned brothers who were sent from Cologne to Oosterwierum. This impression appears to be confirmed by the fact that the transumpt is provided with many marginalia such as *perutilis* (very useful) and *de sororibus nostri ordinis vide Sixtum* (see Sixtus on the sisters of our Order). In the latter case, the marginal note refers to a text included in the transumpt of a bull of Sixtus IV, dated 23 July 1475, in which this pope gave permission to a certain Alessandra de Alfani of Florence to form the Hospitaller hermitages founded in her native city into a monastery and also to found men's and women's convents in the Florentine region. This bull was also the most recent in the collection. Evidently the brothers, leaving Cologne for Oosterwierum and having previously had little to do with sisters of the Order, wanted to use this document to familiarize themselves with the measures they would have to take in regard to the Frisian sisters.

Little was said about the existing situation in Oosterwierum and about what should be improved there, but a letter of 22 September 1482 written by Bernt von Schedelich, *Balier* of Westphalia and Commander of Steinfurt, informed the Commander and brothers of Oosterwierum, evidently already reformed, how they should deal with lay brothers and lay sisters from then on.⁷⁷ He told them that in the recent past at the regional chapter of the Frisian houses in Jemgum, and with the support of all the commanders of Frisia, he had decided that the Frisian commanders should no longer admit lay brothers or lay sisters to the Order by granting them the cross; that lay brothers and lay sisters should no longer profess by taking the vows of the order (*professionem ordinis nostri*) but should make only vows of chastity and obedience, and that lay conventuals must wear a habit distinguishing them from the fully professed conventuals.⁷⁸ Thenceforth they should live under a separate statute

⁷⁵ *Omme sie die reformacien to leren*: Stadtarchiv Köln, Briefeingänge 25 May 1481.

⁷⁶ RAGr, Archief klooster Oosterwierum, inv. no. 1.

⁷⁷ Joosting, 312–13.

⁷⁸ 'Statuimus et ordinavimus, quod extunc et inantea nulles commendatorum terre Frisie aliquos vel aliquas reciperet in fratres vel sorores laicos vel laicas, eis ordinem et crucem conferendo; sed si quos vel quas reciperet, eos vel eas reciperet sub habitus distincto ad obedienciam et castitatem non ad professionem ordinis nostri ... Intelleximus preterea quandam consuetudinem ymmo pocius corruptelam et omni juri contrariam omnique

of obedience, in chastity. Further, lay brothers could no longer be admitted to the house chapter together with the *fratres et sacerdotes et clerici* with the right to vote; they should not play any role in leadership and must always be obedient. The *Balier* did write that he would not forbid the chapter members from inviting lay brothers to their meetings in order to obtain advice from them or to charge them with a particular task. Also instructive was his concluding announcement that he had taken all these measures because he wanted with all his heart to promote the reformation of the commandery, and also because the abbots of the nearby Abbeys of Aduard (Cistercian), Rottum (Benedictine), Termunten (Cistercian) and Wittewierum (Premonstratensian) had likewise decided no longer to admit lay conventuals to their chapters.

It follows that the Frisian commanders had previously admitted both lay brothers and lay sisters into the Order, allowed them to take the Hospitallers' vows and given them the cross. Until 1480 the Frisian *fratres laici* and *sorores laicae* had been considered fully professed members of the Order of Saint John by their own community and by the people in the surrounding area. It can also be deduced that the lay brothers had had access to the chapter of their house and were thus involved in important policy decisions that had to be taken, for example in the choice of a new commander. That this was actually the case is evident from the already-mentioned forms of representation for Warffum and Wijnward, by which various lay brothers were appointed, along with the priest commander and several other priest-brothers, to positions such as cellarer and grange master and also as ordinary craftsmen.

The prominent position the lay brothers held was related to their significance in the convent economy, which until the middle of the fifteenth century was based on self-sufficiency. The running of the agrarian economy in virtually all Frisian convents rested with the lay brothers. The position of the Frisian Hospitallers and the brothers of the Teutonic Order was in this respect no different from that of the Frisian Benedictines, Augustinian canons, Cistercians and Premonstratensians. If the convents of the other orders could offer lay brothers the status of professed members, then those of the military and hospital orders could not be left behind. In the Hospitaller houses the equivalent of *monachi conversi* must have played such a leading role that some of their convents even took their names from them: Burmönken, Tjüchermönken, Havermönken, *Warfumer monniken* and *Oosterwierumer monniken*. They were after all the people who had long projected the image of the house to the outside world. In this, they served the convent not only with their managerial capacities and manpower but also by enriching it through gifts on their admission to the Order. This was also one more reason for them to claim the

reformationi dissonam, quod fratres laici, quibus maneat necessitas obsequendi non auctoritas imperandi, admittantur ad capitulum, habentes vocem in capitulo ut ceteri fratres et sacerdotes et clerici; quam quidem consuetudinem penitus et omnino reprobamus, cassamus et annullamus': *ibid.*

right to vote.⁷⁹ It was only in the course of the fifteenth century, when the economic structure of many convents began to change, for example through the increased leasing of convent lands, and when among diverse orders there was developing a reform movement which showed itself to be wary of large and thus undisciplined lay brother populations, that the authorities within these orders wished to restrict the rights of lay brothers. Thus it was no coincidence that in 1482 the *Balier* referred to similar measures that had already been taken by colleagues in neighbouring convents or other orders.

The fact that after about 1480, fewer and fewer lay brothers were named in the documents, could lead us to deduce that after 1480 the exclusion of lay brothers from the chapters of Hospitaller houses in Frisia was taken seriously, which reduced their status from fully professed members of the Order to that of associated *fratres* and *sorores* with only the duty of obedience. They were not entirely absent, but did not come to the fore as often as they had during the first half of the fifteenth century. In any case, it is known that one lay brother from Wijtwerd took no vows on his admission in 1489 except the vow of obedience.⁸⁰

No further report has survived to illustrate the success of the reform measures at Oosterwierum. That the Order's provincial leadership was serious about transforming the Frisian houses with their pluriform population of priest-brothers, lay brothers, choir-nuns and lay sisters into convents in which prayer was provided by priest-brothers or nuns only, can be deduced from a reorganization decision relating to the Commandery of Abbingwehr. On 10 November 1499 Herbolt von Snetlage, Commander of Steinfurt, still serving as *Balier*, and the chapter of his house decided to incorporate the Order's houses of Hasselt, Hesel and Boekzetel in East Friesland into the house of Abbingwehr. He did this specifically to strengthen the latter house economically so that, from then on, the Commander of Abbingwehr 'sal holden vijf ordensheren tot eme, oer ghetyde tsamen indt koer tho lezene alle daghe, ende dessulven ghelyken mysze, vesper und complete tho syghene dagelix' (will keep five priests of the Order by him, who shall daily read their hours together in the choir and likewise sing mass, vespers and complines every day).⁸¹ A step in this direction had already been made before 1493 through the incorporation of the Commandery of Heiselhusen into the Commandery of Abbingwehr. From that date Heiselhusen contributed towards the material support of Abbingwehr as a subsidiary house available for lease.⁸²

⁷⁹ Noordhuis, p. 69; Mol, *Friese huizen*, pp. 85–7.

⁸⁰ Noordhuis, p. 45. For the definition of 'lay brother' used in this chapter, see above, p. 189, n. 41.

⁸¹ *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, 2, no. 1646.

⁸² Heiselhusen is mentioned as a leased-out grange in a charter of 1493: Schöningh, p. 40.

Female Votes in the Chapter Before and After 1480

Nevertheless, the lay sisters did not disappear from Oosterwierum, Abbingwehr or the former commanderies that were incorporated at Abbingwehr. In 1495, true enough, the two houses had a small community of four to five priest-brothers who had to sing the canonical hours and who also, without lay brothers, thenceforth formed the house chapter. These priest-brothers were allowed to elect a new commander after one had died.⁸³ Each house, however, still accommodated a community of sisters. And it still cost the chapters of these houses some effort not to present these sisters as fully-professed conventuals to the outside Frisian world. In a document of 1516 relating to Oosterwierum there appeared, along with the commander, prior and one of the priest-brothers mentioned by name, a reference to the 'preesteren ende gemene conventuales de Oosterwerum sunte Johannes orden' (priests and all the members of the convent of Saint John's Order at Oosterwierum). Whether or not the sisters were represented in the house's chapter is a separate question. Evidently, lay sisters could form part of the convent without having a full vote in the chapter. It is possible that they were consulted in Oosterwierum over the choice of a new commander but only priest-brothers were eligible to vote. On the other hand, in the nunnery of Wijtwerd in this period the fully-professed or choir sisters did have the right to vote, as can be surmised from a reference in the document of 1499 to the ordinary chapter members who had the right to vote in the convent. The situation was made entirely clear in a document of 1517 concerning the election of a commander. The choice was then in the hands of a resident priest-brother, a priest-brother alias the pastor of Maarhusen, who lived outside the house, the already-named *conversus* Brother Hermen baker, and further 'den gemeynen conventsluyden des hilligen huses Wijtwert' (all the members of the convent of the holy house of Wijtwerd).⁸⁴ As apart from the three brothers mentioned there were only professed sisters in the convent, the group of *conventsluyden* must have been the professed sisters. This means that in 1517 the professed singing nuns played a part in deciding who would be commander. Without doubt, they already had the right to elect their own prioress.

Whether they had had that right for a long time is difficult to say. The fact that the sisters of Warffum and Wijtwerd appear only in the representative councils of their convent after about 1450 suggests that an emancipation process was under way. There is no further evidence as to whether the sisters of the Hospitaller houses in Frisia had a voice in the choice of a new male superior. The documents of the Teutonic Order's houses of Nes and Schoten in Westerlauwers Friesland, which likewise had choir-nuns and lay sisters among their conventuals, suggest that the *sorores* there could exercise no direct influence on the election, except perhaps

⁸³ 'Et moriente comendatore sacerdotes conventuales alium eligunt, quem baiulivus confirmat': 1540: *Sources*, ed. Van Winter, p. 531.

⁸⁴ RAGr., Archief klooster Wijtwerd, inv. no. 115.

through their *confessor*.⁸⁵ It was exclusively the brothers who elected the new commander or prior.

But in the comparable double monasteries or nunneries of other orders nearby the picture was varied. Fifteen kilometres south of Warffum in the Benedictine double monastery of Selwerd, which had a composition virtually identical to that of Warffum and Wijtwerd, the choir-nuns had been involved in the choice of a new abbot at least since 1318.⁸⁶ On 2 June of that year, the prior, cellarers and other officeholders as well as the whole convent took part in electing a new abbot, whom they then presented to the Bishop of Münster for confirmation. The election took place *per formam compromissi*, that is, in steps, by proxy. Named among the 14 convent members involved along with the prior and five lay brother officeholders (*celerarii nostri et conversi*) were the Prioress Hildware, the sub-prioress Teta and the *sorores et moniales nostre* Ava, Frouweka, Renilde, Walgerde and Ghertrude.⁸⁷

More than a century later, at the Premonstratensian double monastery of Langen in Emsingo, not far from Abbingwehr, the sisters were among the voters in the election of a new *prepositus*.⁸⁸ Although he accepted this call to service, the elected party, until then pastor of the nearby parish of Twixlum, was unhappy with his election because he feared the unrest of the female convent members.⁸⁹ In the Premonstratensian women's Priory of Monnikebajum in Westerlauwers Friesland, which had originally formed a single house with the men's Abbey of Mariëndal at Lidlum, the nuns had only recently won the right to vote. In a papal bull of 1464 it was explicitly confirmed that the prioress and her convent had obtained the right from the former Abbot of Lidlum to elect a new prior themselves from among the canons of Lidlum.⁹⁰ In both Langen and Monnikebajum this involved 'singing

⁸⁵ Mol, *Friese huizen*, pp. 67, 89. The documents cited here date from 1350, 1395, 1397 and 1404. What is remarkable is that in 1350 the brothers of Schoten, subordinate to Nes, were permitted to admit people of both sexes to the convent with the permission of, among others, their *familia* as well as the guardians of their own convent (*discreti advocati*).

⁸⁶ *Oorkondenboek of Groningen and Drenthe*, 1, no. 261. Compare Renée Nip, 'De bewoners van het Groninger benedictijnerklooster Selwerd', *Driemaandelijke Bladen*, 41 (1989), 33–58; here 38.

⁸⁷ 'Quibus ab omnibus nobis de capitulo et conventu fuit collata potestas, ut de novo abbate deberent monasterio concorditer providere': *ibid.*

⁸⁸ 'Notum sit ... quod ... conventuales utriusque sexus in Langhen uniformiter elegerunt venerabilem dominum Aytatum the Hlert, curatum in Twixlum, in eorum prelatum et pastorem': *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, 1, no. 621 (c. 1450).

⁸⁹ According to a chronicle-like note in the cartulary of Langen, brother Aytatus informed the abbot of Prémontré that he had accepted his election with reluctance: 'eo quod mulier et quies nunquam habitant sub eodem tectu': *ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Repertorium Germanicum, Verzeichnis: VIII: Verzeichnis der in den Registern und Kameralakten Pius' II vorkommenden Personen, Kirchen und Orte des Deutschen Reiches, seiner Diozesen und Territorien 1458–1464*; 1: Text (Berlin 1993), no. 374. Possibly emancipation here grew out of the increasing economic independence of the priory: when the direct exploitation of the convent's lands with the help of lay brothers of the men's abbey was

nuns'. When the nuns of Warffum and Wijtwerd acquired similar rights at the same time or a little later, it is probable that the same had not yet occurred for the *sorores laicae* in the other Hospitaller houses. The 1482 reformation document for Oosterwierum said only that the lay brothers had previously been admitted to the chapter; the lay sisters were not mentioned.

Low-Budget Convents for Women?

The nunneries of Warffum and Wijtwerd aside, the many convents of lay sisters discussed above do not fit well in the existing picture of the Hospitaller women's convents. The well-known houses of Sigena (Aragon), Pisa and Perugia (Italy), Beaulieu and Fieux (France) and Buckland (England), have generally been regarded by scholars as convents of enclosed nuns. These sisters could not be female counterparts of the knights and sergeant-brothers who populated the Order's commanderies insofar as the men's main task was to support the war in the Holy Land and, later, on Rhodes with manpower, although both male and female houses supported the war with money. In organization and structure the sisters' houses scarcely differed from the countless traditional women's convents populated elsewhere by Benedictine, Cistercian, Premonstratensian, Augustinian and Dominican nuns. At best, one could say that they came under a somewhat more moderate regime. Most nuns entered at an early age, had to pay a dowry and were trained to perform their liturgical task. They usually had a Hospitaller *confessor* and were assisted by Hospitaller brothers in managing secular matters. In a certain sense, their connection with the Order of Saint John was, however, a coincidence. It was often royal and noble initiatives as well as sizeable material endowments that had decided the Hospitaller brothers to create space for these houses. Perhaps because the original Rule did not provide for the admission of choir sisters, additional regulations were drawn up for one of the first of these women's convents, that at Sigena. These regulations showed many similarities with that of the canonesses regular of Saint Augustine.

Warffum and Wijtwerd may have been modelled on Sigena (although this is doubtful), but in any case a different structure had to be found for the other Frisian communities. As was clear from the reform decision of 1480, the status of *donat* was to apply to the lay sisters resident there: they had to lead a chaste and devout life, wear a suitable habit and take a vow of obedience to the commander, but they did not have to profess the *tria substantialia* or the eternal vows. Although this did not make them religious persons in canon law, in daily life they themselves and everyone around them considered them to be such. The success of this practice, measured by

abandoned in favour of leasing them out, the property was divided between Lidlum and Monnikebajum.

the number of their convents, is intriguing. How could the Order of Saint John admit so many lay sisters into its midst, and why did so many women in Frisia choose a life as lay sister with the Hospitallers?

The first element that needs explaining is the cloister-like character of the Frisian military order settlements in general. This was closely bound up with the fact that no knightly culture developed in Frisian lands; that can, in turn, be explained by the fact that warriors in these fertile but boggy districts were not able to fight on horseback in heavy armour.⁹¹ Furthermore, none of the foreign lords who had obtained comital rights to the Frisian lands in the twelfth and thirteen centuries, that is the Bishops of Utrecht, Münster and Bremen, and the Counts of Holland and Oldenburg, had succeeded in converting these into a territorial dominion. As no feudalization occurred, the indigenous elite was able to organize a kind of semi-communal administration in each region or *terra*.⁹² For the allodial nobles there was therefore no reason to embrace the knightly ideal of vassalage. They were proud of the freedom that they believed Charlemagne had bestowed upon them as reward for defending the empire against the Normans.⁹³ Thus, in about 1240, the well-known encyclopaedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus could write of the Frisians that they were not subject to a lord and rejected *militares dignitates*, knightly office, by definition. There were therefore no knights in the Frisian commanderies.

The second consideration is that the Hospitaller houses that housed lay sisters, that is *conversae*, as well as brothers were the last of the cloister-like institutions that arose in the countryside of Frisia in the thirteenth century.⁹⁴ The wave of foundations of indigenous monasteries was sparked in the middle of the twelfth century. With the support of the Frisian elite, reform-minded Benedictines, Augustinian canons, Cistercians and Premonstratensians had added one convent after another to their filiation. Among them, the first and oldest convents were the best endowed. They arose in the middle of the old districts along the coast and there they held fertile domains on the clay soil. The later and newer houses were founded on the edges of these regions or in the peat districts in the south and had to be satisfied with less rich estates. Due to the Frisians' enthusiasm for participating in the crusades, which was strongly encouraged by the leaders of the many newly founded monasteries, the Hospital and the Teutonic Order played a successful part

⁹¹ Johannes A. Mol, 'Frisian Fighters and the Crusade', *Crusades*, 1 (2002), 89–110; on the non-knightly situation in Frisia and its impact on the Hospitallers, see Mol, *Friese huizen*, pp. 89–91.

⁹² This situation would continue into the second half of the fifteenth century, when the Frisian lands were gobbled up one after the other by neighbouring territorial states.

⁹³ Almuth Salomon, *Friesische Geschichtsbilder: Historische ereignisse und kollektives Gedächtnis im mittelalterlichen Friesland* (Aurich, 2000).

⁹⁴ Johannes A. Mol, 'Bemiddelaars voor het Hiernamaals. Kloosterlingen in middeleeuws Frisia', in *Hel en hemel. De middeleeuwen in het Noorden*, ed. E. Knol et al. (Groningen, 2001), pp. 152–65; here pp. 153–5.

in this wave of foundations. But the best places were already occupied, and so most of their houses were located in the less fertile reclaimed areas in the peat and sand districts. Only Sneek, Warffum and Wijtwerd had favourable agricultural locations; in about 1500 they had the most numerous and the finest estates of all the Frisian Hospitaller settlements.

These relatively rich convents were therefore populated by choir-nuns while the poorer houses accommodated mainly lay sisters along with a few priest-brothers and lay brothers. The consequence of this pattern for the development of the female religious life in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has not yet been well analysed. 'As abundant as the stars in the heavens' wrote the chronicler Jacques de Vitry (1160–1240) of the Cistercian nunneries that arose in his time.⁹⁵ He could have written the same about the women's convents of the Benedictines, Premonstratensians and Dominicans. Since about 1100 virtually all the orders had seen a large influx of women into their convents. The travelling preachers of that time, propagating their concept of the *vita apostolica* (the apostolic life), generated at least as much religious enthusiasm among women as among men. Until recently this female influx was studied separately, order by order, which could create the impression that the orders were confronted with the problem of the *cura monialium* one after the other. It is now quite clear that this was not the case; they faced this influx at the same time and their reactions were in many ways similar.

One similarity lay in the conditions imposed on women's convents before they were admitted to their respective orders. In the initial phase these communities, which very often developed in the neighbourhood of, and in communication with, a recently founded men's monastery, did not yet consist of educated nuns capable of being well trained. Most aspirant sisters already had a worldly life behind them. They were widows or they were still married but had the permission of their husband to enter the convent. They were *conversae* in the original sense of the word, women converted at a later age who, as such, could normally only be admitted as a lay sister. The first reaction of the orders, particularly the new or reform-minded among them, was to admit such *conversae* in large numbers, whether these women were rich or poor, and to found convents for them alongside and under the protection of the men's abbeys. In the long term, these orders always aimed at making convents of choir-sisters that could be economically independent. This aim was strongly encouraged by the higher church authorities who, fearing the problems that could arise from an uncontrolled multiplication of unenclosed women's communities, recognized only one form of religious life for women, that of the enclosed community of prayer, entirely apart, away from the world. However, such communities, with a large number of economically inactive women, could exist only if they commanded sufficient interest-bearing funds in the form of large

⁹⁵ Brigitte Degler-Spengler 'Zahlreich wie die Sterne des Himmels. Zisterzienser, Dominikaner und Franziskaner vor dem Problem der Inkorporation von Frauenklöstern', *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte*, 4 (1985), 37–50: here 38 ff.

holdings in land. They were therefore relatively costly enterprises.⁹⁶ In practice, their capital could be maintained only if every nun provided a dowry on admission, and this evidently led to the sisters being selected largely by their social status. In the long term, this condition in itself clearly set a limit to the growth of the number of women's convents, which is evident from an assessment of the expansion and structure of the women's convents throughout western Europe at the end of the thirteenth century.⁹⁷

When the wave of foundations ended in about 1280, four out of five women's convents had an elitist population. The number of women's convents would presumably therefore have been much greater if a formula had been available that allowed a more active economic contribution from the women who entered the convents.⁹⁸ Such a formula was developed only in the course of the thirteenth century, and was authorized only after much hesitation and resistance by the Church authorities. A compilation of rules of life that were practised in beguinages and beguine houses offered clear guidelines to men and women who wanted to lead a religious life in the world. This was realized in the third rule of Saint Francis, which proved very useful for women wishing to live in a religious community without paying a large entrance fee. It permitted these so-called tertiaries both to retain their possessions, which could revert to their families upon death, and to provide for their own maintenance through, for example, spinning and weaving or other work for money. As *conversae*, they had time for such work because they did not have to spend half the day singing the canonical hours. They merely attended a short office in the vernacular that left them enough time free for work. To found such sister houses required only a small part of the investment needed for a traditional women's convent. No wonder that, from the second half of the fourteenth century, everywhere in the Low Countries 'third order' or 'tertiary' convents rose out of the ground like mushrooms, most of them in an urban context in which they offered women from the middle class every opportunity to lead a secure, cloister-like existence. In the Diocese of Utrecht alone, no less than 166 came into being in the period from 1375 to 1525, a number estimated as four times as many as the number of existing

⁹⁶ This was also the case for men's convents, but these, with their great reservoir of lay brothers, could exploit their holdings more profitably by working them themselves.

⁹⁷ See the recent survey by Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (Ithaca NY, 1997), with the English language literature that he cites. Venarde dated the end of the wave of foundations at about 1215, which was a consequence of restricting his focus to England and France. Had he also considered the Netherlands and, for example, the Rhine region, he would certainly have had to move his end date a half century forward. The present assessment demonstrates that an integration of the Anglo-American, French, German and Dutch historiography is urgently needed in the area of the history of religious women.

⁹⁸ I am building here on the basic idea formulated in Brigitte Degler-Spengler, 'Die religiöse Frauenbewegung des Mittelalters. Konversen – Nonnen – Beginen', *Rottenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte*, 3 (1984), 75–88.

traditional women's convents that had arisen in the same area in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁹⁹

Economically speaking, these tertiary houses were low-budget institutions in which women outside aristocratic circles could lead an acceptable form of religious life. The 'admission costs' could be kept low because the sisters were able to use a large part of their time for the house in an economically productive way. There was apparently something similar in the Hospitaller communities of lay sisters in Friesland. These houses could be founded and continue to exist in large numbers thanks to the lay status of their residents, because the lay sisters as well as lay brothers were expected to contribute to the convents' economies. It remains questionable whether we should assume, with Schöningh, that the Hospitaller sisters in Frisia were active in the milking of cows: he talks of a contribution to the *Milchwirtschaft*. Yet several of these houses had *sorores* present in the agrarian dependencies of the commanderies.¹⁰⁰ We also know that *wand* or textiles were produced in Abbingwehr and Wijtwerd.¹⁰¹ Presumably the lay sisters, unlike the nuns in Warffum or Wijtwerd, had to perform manual labour to guarantee sufficient income to the convent. Indeed, virtually no 'third order' convents were founded in the fifteenth century in the areas where the Hospitallers had their settlements for lay sisters. Evidently the Hospitallers had long been providing for lay sisters' needs.

The question remains as to why the Hospitallers were the only order in this region to allow this formula.¹⁰² I think that, precisely because they had few women's convents in their order and also because their superiors had little experience of supporting such communities, they had more of a free hand in Frisia than the Benedictines, Cistercians, Premonstratensians and Augustinian canons. All over Europe these orders were intensely involved with the *cura monialium* (the care of nuns), but even though their abbeys and priories in Frisia also had their own regional tradition, they could not entirely ignore the guidelines that their general chapters prescribed for them with regard to the founding of women's houses. Within the Order of Saint John, in contrast, the *Bailie* of Frisia was already an accepted maverick on account of the knightless, cloister-like character of its settlements. The priest-brothers there enjoyed an extensive degree of autonomy. If the lay sisters had to be classed as donats and not as fully professed members of the Order, even though in practice their role within the Order was similar to that of fully professed sisters,

⁹⁹ Koen Goudriaan, 'De Derde Orde van Sint Franciscus in het bisdom Utrecht. Een voorstudie', *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis*, 1 (1998), 205–61: here 239–41.

¹⁰⁰ In Heiselhusen and Jemgum (Holtgaste).

¹⁰¹ See for example the notice of two payments with *wande* in a register of Abbinwehr: '4 Grasen inna Saedlond cofft van Ennen Ubbana to Uttum vor want unde ghelt; 4 Grasen cofft van mester Haien to Grimessum beatelt mit gheld unde wande': *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, 1, no. 469 (1437).

¹⁰² The Teutonic Order may also have possessed a house with a community of lay sisters in this region.

the *Balier* of Steinfurt did not need to be concerned. As long as the Frisian houses simply paid their responsions, he could give an excellent account of himself to his superiors in Southern Germany and Rhodes.

Chapter 8

Fleur de Beaulieu (d. 1347), Saint of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem¹

Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq

Between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries numerous orders of monks and canons were founded. The problems encountered by women in entering these orders are well known, initially in forcing an entry and later in remaining within them. The fact that the majority of the military orders never founded a female branch underlines the distinctiveness of the Hospitallers, who had some female houses and during the fourteenth century gave a saint to France: Saint Fleur or Flor of Beaulieu in Quercy. This woman became the subject of a *vita*, a holy biography, of good quality. More than a hundred miracles were attributed to her during the medieval period and although her official cult dates only from the nineteenth century, it is attested locally from its beginnings. Nevertheless, it was not until 1946 that the relevant primary sources were published by Clovis Brunel.² Baseless legends and assertions or even falsehoods about Saint Fleur continue to circulate today. This study will consider the historiographical tradition first. It will then study the documents from three angles. What do they teach us about relations between the Hospitallers and the house of Beaulieu? This Hospitaller saint died in 1347: what type of sanctity did she represent? Finally, the collection of miracles, drawn up in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, offers an opportunity to study devotional practices in the late Middle Ages.

The history of the dossier of Saint Fleur was authoritatively set out by the editor of her *vita* in 1946.³ To summarize: the Latin *vita* of Fleur written by her confessor (V 7 and 9) was lost long ago. It was translated in the fifteenth century and concluded with a collection of miracles, all in the dialect of Quercy. This translation was last noted in 1721. When, in the seventeenth century, the Jesuit Bollandists were conducting their researches for the *Acta Sanctorum*, they found nothing on this

¹ Editors' note: this article has been translated from French by Helen J. Nicholson.

Author's note: I thank Anthony Luttrell for involving me in this collective analysis of current scholarship.

² Clovis Brunel, 'Vida e miracles de sancta Flor', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 64 (1946), 5–49. Following Brunel, I refer to the chapters corresponding to the *vita* and to the miracles by the letters V and M respectively, followed by the chapter number in the edition.

³ For all this see Brunel's introduction.

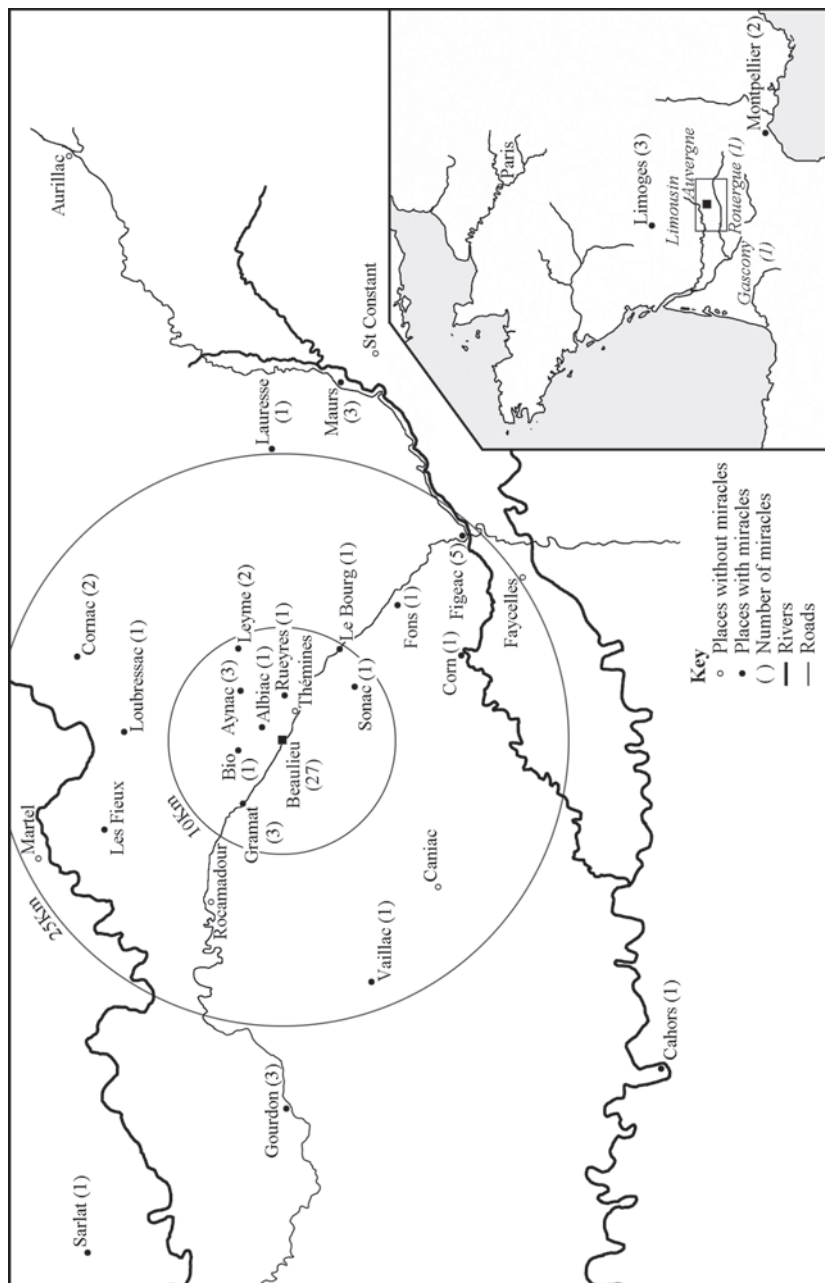


Fig. 8.1 Location of the Hospitaller house of Beaulieu, showing the distribution of Saint Fleur's miracles

saint except a study in Italian by Giacomo Bosio, a historian writing at the end of the sixteenth century, which was brief and full of errors.⁴ This became the basis of the notice in the June series of the *Acta*, volume 2, which appeared in 1698.⁵ Unsatisfied, the Jesuits then made contact with an author who went on to set down what would be for centuries the state of knowledge about the saint. The curé of Saint-Urcisse of Cahors, Hugues Amadiou, a former confessor of the nuns of Beaulieu, had at his disposal the fifteenth-century manuscript in the Quercy dialect. Regrettably he did not pass on the document in the form in which he found it but translated it very freely into Latin, and rearranged its contents. Such was the source material for the article in the supplement of the *Acta Sanctorum* of 1715.⁶ However, before this, in 1667, the same text of the fifteenth century had been faithfully recopied by Doat, who followed it with a translation into French.⁷ Yet the historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continued to be based on the mediocre publication of the *Acta Sanctorum* and Doat's transcription remained unknown until in 1946 Clovis Brunel published the vernacular text with a valuable critical apparatus.⁸

⁴ Giacomo Bosio, *Dell'istoria della Sacra Religione ... di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1594; 2nd edn Rome, 1629), pp. 18–20. In 1625 Louis Mesplède, Dominican of Figeac, published a work that summarized the manuscript in the vernacular, but this is unobtainable.

⁵ Fleur was placed under 11 June not because this was the day of her death, which is still unknown, despite recent assertions by Bouange and Juillet, but because the translation of her body (M 46) was made on that day: see below, pp. 228–30, n. 66.

⁶ Currently at pages *36–*43 of June 2 of the Palmé edition of the *Acta Sanctorum* (Paris, 1863–1940).

⁷ In vol. 123 of the Doat Collection in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, compiled on the initiative of Colbert. The French translation, in *Analecta Juris Pontificii: Dissertations sur divers sujets de Droit Canonique, Liturgie, et Théologie*, ed. Louis Chaillot, vol. 18 (Rome, 1879), has passed almost unnoticed.

⁸ This was not enough to make the critics return the Hospitaller saint at once to her time and place and authentic medieval tradition. The great hagiographical works continued to ignore the edition of 1946: see *Vies des saints et bienheureux*, ed. Benedictine Fathers of Paris, 10 (1952), p. 128, which refers throughout to the *Acta Sanctorum*, as does the *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, ed. Istituto Giovanni XXIII, 5 (Rome, 1964), cols 929–30. Fleur has no entry in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina*. It was not until the 1970s that bibliographies began to refer to Brunel's edition: see, for example, 'Fleur', in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et géographie ecclésiastique*, 17 (1971) (henceforth cited as *DHGE*). For the earlier bibliography, see Mathieu de Gaussancourt, *Le martyrologe des chevaliers de S. Jean de Hiérusalem, dits de Malte*, 2 vols (Paris, 1643); César le-Blanc, *Vie de Sainte Fleur* (Toulouse, 1649); Claude Chastelain, *Martyrologe Universel* (Paris, 1709), p. 290; Antoine de Cathala-Coture, *Histoire du Querci*, vol. 1 (Montauban, 1785), p. 227; 'Chronologie des grandes prieures de Beaulieu', *Revue nobiliaire*, 6 (1868); Pierre Hélyot, *Histoire des ordres monastiques et militaires*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1792), pp. 132–43; Cyprien Lacarrière, *Vie de Sainte Flore, ou Fleur, vierge de l'ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, à l'Hôpital-Beaulieu en*

In examining the fundamental value of this corpus of material, it is first necessary to ask how it developed. It was Fleur's anonymous confessor who wrote the lost Latin *vita*.⁹ He knew Fleur until her death, foretold in chapter 4. The translator into the Quercy dialect is also unknown to us, but Clovis Brunel has shown that he was certainly identical with the compiler of the miracles, the first of which (M 1) bears a date: 1456.¹⁰ Another clue allows us to fix a *terminus ad quem* for the collection. A work of Bonaventure is mentioned (V 20) that does not carry his title of 'saint': certainly, therefore, it predates his canonization in 1482.¹¹

What is known of the monastery named in the biography (V 2) as the 'Hospital of Beaulieu de Saint-Jean, called Hospital of Madona Ayglina'? Today it is situated in the parish of Saint-Julien d'Issendolus on the main road from Figeac to Notre-Dame de Rocamadour (fig. 8.1).¹² The essential information on this female monastery, part of the Priory of Saint-Gilles, was published in the *Cartulaire* of the Hospitallers

Quercy, aujourd'hui l'hôpital-Issendolus, diocèse de Cahors, 2nd edn (Toulouse, 1871); A. du Bourg, *Histoire du grand prieuré de Toulouse* (Toulouse, 1882); Guillaume M. G. Bouange, *Histoire de l'abbaye d'Aurillac, 894–1789*, 2 (Paris, 1899), pp. 142–52, 566–87; Joseph Amadiou, *Sainte Fleur de l'hôpital Beaulieu* (Aurillac, 1923); Emile Albe, 'Les religieuses hospitalières de l'Ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem au diocèse de Cahors', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France*, 27 (1941), 180–220; Michel Even, *La vie de la chère sainte Fleur, religieuse professe de l'ordre et Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, 1309–1347, de l'Hôpital Beaulieu, en Quercy* (Paris, 1944); Bernard Montagnes, 'Sainte Fleur et les Dames Maltaises de l'Hôpital-Beaulieu', *Des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem de Chypre et de Rhodes, de hier aux chevaliers de Malte aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1985), pp. 249–71; Roger Jalenques, *Sainte Flore, née à Maurs (1309–1347): une sainte originaire de Haute-Auvergne* (Aurillac, 1989); Jacques Juillet, *Sainte Fleur: Dame hospitalière de l'ordre de Sainte-Jean-de-Jérusalem*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1997). These last two publications repeat many errors and contain more apologetics than history. Confusions occurring before 1946 can be pardoned, such as the young man, *macip jove*, of M 6 who became a personal name, Macippus Jovoeus in Lacarrière, p. 113, and in Even, p. 111; and *angial*, which means 'angel' (V 4, 6, 7, 8, 10), being mistranslated as 'angle' (*angulus*). It is much more serious that these misinterpretations continue despite Brunel's edition: for instance, at V 10 the breast of an eagle, le *piechitz*, 'chest' in the Quercy dialect, is still translated as 'the talons' by Jalenques and Juillet.

⁹ 'Aquest que parle aissi era son confessor' (V 7). V 9 gives another detail: the author had received the saint's general confession during her lifetime.

¹⁰ The phrase quoted in note 9 is followed by the phrase: 'confessor del scrich del cal aquest romans es estat trach' demonstrating the relationship between the first biography, the translation and the recording of the miracles. Chronological references in the text are too rare to omit mention (M 40) of a Bishop of Saintes who succeeded miraculously in proving his innocence and who has been identified with Bernard de Sault (or Saux), Bishop of Saintes from 1363 to 1380: Pius Gams, *Series episcoporum* (Ratisbon, 1873), p. 624.

¹¹ It is thus necessary to correct the error in *DHGE* (see note 8 above) which dates the collection to the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

¹² The local sources also refer to it as 'the Hospital of Saint-Dolu', an error for 'the Hospital of Issendolus'.

published by Joseph Delaville le Roulx, to which it will be necessary to return.¹³ The monastery of Beaulieu in the Diocese of Cahors was not, however, founded by the Order, nor immediately linked to it. The biographer of Saint Fleur discovered the name of the founder, Aygline, surviving in local memory. Beaulieu was actually founded by a lord of the region, Guibert de Thémines,¹⁴ and his wife, Aygline, before 1245–46, the date at which the house received its oldest recorded donation.¹⁵ The charitable purpose of the house was expressly set out: ‘pauperes possint recepi et etiam peregrini’ (to receive the poor and also pilgrims). Its purpose thus predated its affiliation to the Order on 19 July 1259.¹⁶ On that date, in the presence of two other members of the family, Guillaume and Barascon de Thémines, the founders ceded the hospital to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. Both brothers and sisters had previously lived in the house. Finally, in March 1298, the process was completed when Beaulieu was given its own regulations, setting out the sisters’ right freely to elect the prioress, setting the level of the resposion and making the house subject to visitation by the Prior of Saint-Gilles.¹⁷

This document containing the regulations is fundamental to our subject, for not only did it detail the position of the women’s house within the structures of the Order and the conditions for the election of the superior, and fix the *numerus clausus* (the maximum number of professed nuns) at 39, but it also offered the rare benefit of listing the names and forenames of 35 nuns, apparently the complete monastic community. The *vita* (V 1) tells us that Fleur was at Beaulieu with three of her sisters; but we search the list of 1298 in vain for four religious women with the same surname, of whom one was named Fleur. There is a double problem to resolve: the problem of Fleur’s social origin, and the question of her entry into the monastery. The two are linked.

¹³ CH, 1, pp. ccxxvii–ccxxix; see also Joseph Delaville le Roulx, ‘Les hospitalières de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem’, in his *Mélanges sur l’ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1910), no. 12.

¹⁴ Lot, canton of la Capelle-Marival.

¹⁵ CH, 1, p. ccxxvii, and 2, no. 2352. Between March 1245 and March 1246 Géraud V, Bishop of Cahors, gave the church of Issendolus to the hospital founded by Guibert and Aygline around a decade earlier and thus in 1235 or 1236, during the time of his predecessor Pons d’Antéjac (see Gams, p. 525). It is unclear on what grounds recent authors (Montagnes, Jalenques, Juillet) have asserted that the foundation took place in 1238.

¹⁶ CH, 2, no. 2923.

¹⁷ CH, 3, no. 4413, in the presence of Guillaume de Villaret, Master of the Order. The prioress established by the brothers had the same name as the foundress of the 1230s: Aygline de Thémines. The sisters would elect the subsequent prioresses. Among the witnesses to the deed, which recalled that the founders had taken the habit, appeared Guillaume de Gourdon, ‘son of Lord Guibert de Thémines’. The master ‘ceded and confirmed’ to the prioress and the nuns of Beaulieu many houses belonging to the Order, such as Martel, but there is no proof that this last house later formed a third female monastery in the region, alongside Beaulieu and Fieux (Albe, pp. 182, 217–20 and n. 73).

Fleur's biographer informs us that she died in 1347 (M 63), 'after a great number of years' (V 4), thus refuting speculation about much earlier dates.¹⁸ Since her arrival in the house (V 2) certainly took place after 1298, it should be possible to pinpoint more precisely the year between 1298 and 1347 in which the saint, who was fourteen on her entry to the house (V 1), became a nun. The *vita* provides us in passing with another biographical pointer: V 13 mentions a miracle that occurred 'twenty years before her death'.¹⁹ It is therefore certain that Fleur spent at least 20 years in the monastery. If she took the habit a little before 1327, she died at around the age of 34 years. If she entered a little after 1298 she was over 60 when she died.

What were her origins? The *vita* states that she was noble, belonging to a numerous family of ten children, of whom four out of seven daughters became professed sisters at Beaulieu, and that she grew up among 19 children. It gives no other details except for the place of her birth at Maurs in the arrondissement of Aurillac, in the Diocese of Clermont, and the first names of her father and mother, Pons and Melhors. The only more precise information about the saint's relations is given in a later manuscript of unknown date, which was also copied by Doat and which had been copied by Mesplède in or after 1625: it stated that her father was Pons of Corbie. No *castrum* or noble family of this name can be found in the region.²⁰ Again according to Mesplède, Fleur's mother belonged to the Merle family, whose castle is known; it lies in the commune of Saint-Constant in the canton of Maurs and the diocese of Clermont.

What are these second-hand assertions worth? Recently Jacques Juillet has affirmed that Fleur was descended from the Corbie family, which during the fourteenth century gave a chancellor to France. Yet this house originated in Beauvais, not in central France.²¹ Again, to substantiate the maternal descent of Fleur, he maintains without further proof that Fouques de Merle, marshal of the king in 1302, 'could have been the father or uncle of her mother Melhors' and that Delphine de

¹⁸ See the summary below, p. 229, n. 66, setting out the historiographical variants on the career of Saint Fleur. Note also that in 1347, the date of her death, a list of nuns at Beaulieu gave a total of 31. The total number fell to 14 in 1367; cf. Albe, p. 193.

¹⁹ 'Et enaïssi la virgis Flors, vingt ans avant que passes d'acquest secle'.

²⁰ See Georges Thonnat, *Documents généalogiques sur les familles du Haut-Quercy* (Cahors, 1977).

²¹ Arnaud de Corbie was effectively chancellor of France from 1388 to 1413 (Thonnat, p. 127), but what connection was there between the families of Corbie and Quercy in the thirteenth century? Juillet, p. 8, seems actually less sure about the relationship than he maintains, as he emphasizes later (p. 9) that sisters were not admitted to the Hospitallers unless they could bring proof of eight quarterings of nobility, which 'attests to the knightly origin of the Corbies'. The deed of 1298 did not in fact contain this requirement; the requirement for eight quarterings of nobility was not introduced until the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

Merle, present at the chapter in 1298 was 'without doubt Fleur's aunt'.²² The deed of 1298 did include among the professed sisters at Beaulieu a certain Delphine de Merle, the last but one on the list and thus apparently one of the latest entrants, but it is not known whether or how she was related to Fleur and her sisters who, as was stated above, were not listed among the professed nuns present. We must limit ourselves to the data in the *vita*.

The *miracula* tell us that Fleur had a brother at Figeac (M 107) but do not name him. She also had a first cousin (V 11), a monk at the abbey of Figeac, 'of very great virtue and abstinence'; he was not called Corbie or Merle but Aymeric Fayzela, doubtless from Faycelles in the canton of Figeac. The biographer also talks of her 'cosina, Madona Aycilina' (V 7), a nun at Beaulieu; but what can we do with merely a first name? Apparently on the simple basis alone that the names looked similar, Delaville le Roulx identified her with one Ayclène who also appeared at the tail end of the list in 1298; but her name was neither Ayclène de Merle nor Ayclène de Corbie but de Faverlas.²³ If it were certain that Fleur and this Ayclène were cousins, and thus of the same generation, one could suppose that the saint and her sisters entered the monastery a short time after Ayclène and that she did not therefore die 'very young', as has been claimed by those who followed Bosio. This is a flimsy hypothesis, yet it can be reinforced by the more reliable pointer provided by her other cousin. Turning to Figeac, in a list of monks of the abbey produced in 1309 we have the pleasant surprise of finding Aymeric Faycelles, the first cousin mentioned in the *vita*.²⁴ So it could very well be that Fleur entered Beaulieu at about the beginning of the fourteenth century rather than a quarter of a century later. In any case, her ancestry remains a complete mystery.

Two observations are appropriate here. If Fleur's parents were of important nobility it is amazing that her biographer did not give more details. Another point which should encourage us to be wary is that one would have thought that at one time or another the miracles attributed to Fleur – during her lifetime, at her death, in the course of her translation of 1360 or afterwards, as they extended until 1482 – would have been grounds for pride on the part of her lineage. Such was not the case. No miracle was noted for Merle or Saint Constant. Three people from Maurs, her native village, were certainly favoured by the saint, but none of them was described as her relative.²⁵ The family could equally have claimed the right and

²² Juillet, p. 9. In contrast, Albe, p. 192, makes Fleur the daughter of the lord of Merle.

²³ See the index to *CH*.

²⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Doat 126, fol. 101. There were 30 monks. Aymeric Faycelles is the fifteenth on the list, and must therefore have been at the monastery for some years. I have not found him on the other lists of the monks of Figeac.

²⁵ A monk (M 29), a woman (M 69), and a man accused by 'the lay lord of Maurs' who was not said to be Fleur's father (M 30). 'The relations' whom she went to see in Maurs only exist in Juillet's imagination (p. 12). The anonymous 'nieces' who went to visit her at the monastery are also absent from the documents, despite Lacarrière, Bouange and Even.



Fig. 8.2 Aerial view of the ruins of Beaulieu Priory

the honour of burial in the church at the saint's side.²⁶ It is known that the lords of Thémînes, founders of Beaulieu, had their family tomb in the monastery.²⁷ It would be reasonable to expect that her relatives would not have failed to proclaim their relationship to the saint. On all this the documentation is silent. *A contrario*, we discover that in the seventeenth century Gaussancourt, a heraldic specialist, confused Fleur with another saint, Roseline de Villeneuve, which was flattering for the great Provençal family – it is easiest to do favours for those who do not need them²⁸ – but not for the relations of the Quercy saint. It could be suggested that in exalting her origins without giving more details, the hagiographer was simply following a well-known convention.

What, then, were the activities of the nuns of Beaulieu? The structures of the community were evoked in passing by the *vita*. It mentioned the dormitory and the refectory (V 4), and showed Fleur in a chamber near to a bed with curtains, being spied on by a pious woman (V 17). Had the nuns abandoned the communal dormitory with the passing years?²⁹ Was Fleur sick and isolated in a private room? We do not know. More importantly, had the nuns maintained their hospitaller vocation as intended by their foundress or were they now dedicated merely to reciting the divine office?³⁰ The statutes of 1298 set out the officers, of whom one was a hospitaller and one a *hostelier*.³¹ The Hospital's monasteries were by no

²⁶ In particular, this happened to Roseline de Villeneuve, a Carthusian saint from Provence (d. 1329), who was sister of Hélión de Villeneuve, Master of the Hospital (d. 1346): Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, 'Roseline, Jeanne et Jeanne-Diane, trois bienheureuses chez les Villeneuve en un siècle?', *Revue Mabillon*, 65, n.s. 4 (1993), 133–76.

²⁷ In 1297 Barascon de Thémînes founded a house for 12 religious women of the Order of the Hospital at Fieux (commune of Miers, canton of Gramat); he reserved the right to be buried either in his parents' tomb at Beaulieu or in whichever cemetery of the Hospital he preferred: *CH*, 3, no. 4375.

²⁸ French proverb. For Roseline de Villeneuve, see n. 26 above.

²⁹ At Alguaire in the fifteenth century, where private rooms were the norm: Anthony Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill, Hospitaller of Alguaire: 1415–1456', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 28 (1998), 219–49; I thank the author for having given me a copy of his article. For other orders, see Nancy Bradley Warren, *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 19–21.

³⁰ J. Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et à Chypre, 1100–1310* (Paris, 1904), made some important remarks on the hospitaller function of the Order: (1) that the ordinances of 1182 concerning the care of the sick (washing them, feeding them, making beds, and so on) did not mention sisters, but entrusted these duties to the *servientes* (the servants) (p. 339); (2) the term *elemosinarii* vanished rapidly from the documentation (p. 341); (3) the female houses of the Order were called *monasteria*, not *hospitalaria* (p. 299); and see *CH*, 1, p. ccxxii.

³¹ The officers present in 1298 (*CH*, 3, no. 4413) were, in descending order of seniority, the prioress, the sacristine, the cellaress, the cantoress, the *ostaleria*, the infirmeress, the *hospitalaria*, the portress. Dictionaries of medieval Latin allow little distinction between the

means the only ones to have such officers. There was also a *hostaleria* nearby at the house of Cistercian nuns at Leyme.³² In our *corpus*, the *vita* and the miracles, the only officer who appears is the *cantrix* (V 21), which argues rather for a life dedicated to the *opus Dei*.³³ In particular, her confessor never gave an instance of Fleur's devotion towards pilgrims or the sick in the hospital, nor did he mention any journeys to the neighbouring towns to visit the beds of the sick.³⁴ He tells us (V 2) that when she entered the house she received the habit and conscientiously learnt to say the offices. Very quickly thereafter she went from ecstasy to ecstasy and her mystical transports alone held all his attention.

One could suggest that she was an exception and that the community remained faithful to active charitable work. One comment (V 2) allows for this possibility. When she entered the religious life the monastery was so rich that the future saint was afraid of being damned. She confided in a holy man who reassured her and to some extent justified such material prosperity. Wealth is necessary, he told her, for the *malaudes* (sick people), 'that is to say, those who are not yet sufficiently strong in God's love', whom wealth sustained in their spiritual progress.³⁵ Who were these sick people? One possibility is that *malaudes* may have referred to sick guests cared for in the house, Christ's poor whose assistance required large revenues. But in that case the religious women could themselves have lived in the poverty desired by the young recruit while still cherishing their revenues, and Fleur would not have had a bad conscience. A second hypothesis is that the *malaudes* were the nuns themselves. The term would then be taken in the metaphorical sense of the sick in soul, 'the lukewarm' referred to by Saint John the Divine,³⁶ those in the female community who had embraced a life of renunciation but were not yet sufficiently courageous to sustain it, in contrast to the saintly Fleur who had the grace to aspire to it at once. The answer is not clear but the second interpretation seems more likely. Fleur would have become an example above all to the sisters, as the text states. Even if it were proven that, at the period when she entered it, the monastery still preserved the

two terms – *ostaleria*, *hospitalaria* – as Doat transcribed them, nor between their respective functions.

³² Canton of La Capelle-Marival. A deed of 1351, in MS Doat 124, fol. 194, lists 34 nuns. The officers of these 'contemplatives' were the same as at Beaulieu in 1298 (*CH*, 3, no. 4413): *cantaressa*, sacristine, *hostaleria*. On the other hand, the list of nuns at Beaulieu after 1298 no longer mention this last office, which seems to confirm the remark of Delaville le Roux cited above, p. 217, n. 30.

³³ Delaville le Roux noted that the offices of cantor and of sacristan did not exist in male Hospitalier communities.

³⁴ Contrary to Juillet's claims (p. 12). We are not told that the saint was present when the miracles of Gramat or of Loubressac occurred (M 41, 43, 51, and so on). These took place at a distance and apparently after her death. Even, p. 41, is merely speculating in claiming that on entering the Order Fleur immediately devoted herself to the service of the poor and pilgrims.

³⁵ 'Malaudes so es assaber d'aquels que encaras no so be fermes en la amor de Dieu.'

³⁶ Rev. 3:6.



Fig. 8.3 Doorway of the chapter house at Beaulieu Priory

important charitable role which was its original purpose, it is not certain that the practice had continued through the decades. In any case the later documents do not prove that it had.³⁷

Can our *corpus* clarify another aspect of life in the Order: relations with the masculine branch? To which order did the biographer and the later translator of the *vita* belong? Were they both Hospitallers? This is likely but not certain. Who was on the spot to provide spiritual direction or material assistance for the nuns?³⁸ On the day of the saint's death stonecutters working at the house saw a *capela revestit*, a chaplain wearing a habit, floating over the monastery the whole day long.

³⁷ The sole reference (M 109) to a woman on a pilgrimage who spent the night at Beaulieu does not seem sufficient to prove that the monastery had an essentially charitable purpose.

³⁸ The foundation of Fieux in 1297 anticipated that the 12 women would be under the spiritual direction of a priest wearing the habit of the Hospital (*CH*, 3, no. 4375), but it is not clear that this situation would continue indefinitely.

Presumably he was wearing the habit of the Order of Saint John that had been honoured by the person of Fleur (M 63). It is also possible that the 'brother of the Hospital and priest' who was miraculously healed (M 60) was a Hospitaller. Two donats of the Hospital were the beneficiaries of miracles which are, alas, undated (M 16, 17 and 36). It is not possible to confirm that the *capela* who said mass (V 19) or the *capelan religios* (V 16) who defied her to perform a miracle and who died a little after his recklessness were necessarily chaplains of the Order. In Occitan, *capela(n)* is ambiguous and can indicate a secular priest. There are several references to 'religious men' arriving at the nuns' house; possibly they were brethren coming on visitation. In about 1327 a master of theology was at Beaulieu, but his origin is not specified (V 13). All in all, therefore, not only was the dossier not compiled to glorify the Order but the links between the masculine hierarchy and the female religious appear to have been slight.³⁹

Connections with the Friars Minor (V 19 and M 108) and with the neighbouring Benedictine abbeys are better attested. A monk of the abbey of Saint-Pierre de Maurs (M 29), a nun and an Abbess of Leyme were among those miraculously cured (M 59 and 91). Relations with the ancient abbey of Figeac were particularly close. Moreover, the cession of Beaulieu to the Hospital in 1259 was promulgated in that abbey. Numerous inhabitants of the town profited from the saint's *virtus*. Above all, it was the Abbot of Figeac and not a dignitary of the Hospital – one might have expected it to be the Prior of Saint-Gilles – who carried out the translation of the relics in 1360.⁴⁰ At this juncture it would be relevant to recall the recent history of the abbey. Reformed by Cluny in the eleventh century, it had again become very lax in the fourteenth century, to the point that the Abbot of Cluny had to intervene ruthlessly in 1323. In any case, it was under Géraud de Lentilhac, elected after this intervention and abbot until 1377, that the elevation of the relics of Fleur and of many other saints took place.⁴¹

What was Saint Fleur's place in the evolution of the ideal of female sanctity? She was above all else a religious. Why was she in a Hospitaller house rather than elsewhere? This is a question raised by every entry into a religious house, which it is almost always impossible to answer. Was it a personal choice? We do not know. Was it family preference, as was clear in the preferential attachment to the

³⁹ It is significant that in 1349, only two years after Fleur's death, the prioress, a new Aygline de Thémines elected in 1347 (MS Doat, 123, fols 344–9), refused to comply with an instruction from the Prior of Saint-Gilles: 'Beaulieu is not subject except in certain cases' (ibid., fols 350–54). This could explain why the Order does not seem to have taken part in the translation of 1360.

⁴⁰ One might suggest that Aymeric Faycelles, exemplary monk of Figeac and Fleur's cousin, played an active role in the promotion of the saint's cult (M 46) but as he was already a veteran monk in 1309 it is doubtful whether he was still alive in 1360. The elevation of the relics could not have taken place without the Bishop of Cahors's permission. At this date Bertrand de Cardaillac (1324–64) occupied the see: Gams, pp. 525, 609.

⁴¹ See 'Figeac', in *DHGE*, 16 (1967).

Hospitallers of the Thémînes, founders of the house, who gave several prioresses to Beaulieu?⁴² Since nothing is known of Fleur's parents, who had four daughters and a niece at Beaulieu, we may suppose that they chose a rule of life which was, as Jacques de Vitry noted in the thirteenth century, less strict than that of other orders, notably the Cistercians.⁴³ These hypotheses depend in turn on the answer to a preliminary question: did parents really and always have a choice? Despite the general pressure from noble families who needed monasteries in which to place surplus daughters or daughters whom they were unable to endow as their rank required, or who relied on these daughters to pray for their lineage, there were still too few houses for women for a combination of reasons: the donors' preference for masculine communities; the very widespread doubts of the new religious orders regarding women and the resulting prohibition on affiliations of women's houses to the new orders; the structural fragility of female houses, aggravated by the economic climate of the late Middle Ages.⁴⁴ The Order of the Hospital was no exception, and even less so during the fourteenth century as calamities accumulated. As a result, the *numerus clausus*, the fixed number of nuns, imposed at Beaulieu was the norm in female abbeys.⁴⁵

What religious profile does this hagiographical dossier produce? Was the Rule of the Hospital followed perfectly at Beaulieu? Fleur's unease in the face of wealth (V 2) has already been noted; it seemed to her to contravene the vow of poverty. But so much for scruples! The saint did not leave Beaulieu in search of an *arctior vita* (a stricter way of life); she was satisfied with the personal practice of abstinence. As for the vow of chastity, there are a few clues. Concern for the purity of nuns had driven Pope Boniface VIII to impose in the bull *Periculoso* the strictest enclosure, active and passive, on the whole Catholic Church for the first time.⁴⁶ At first sight, this bull should have prevented nuns from leaving their house. Yet we see Fleur riding towards Figeac, where her brother lived (M 107). We may note the arrival at the monastery of two Friars Minor from a foreign country, who stop to talk to the

⁴² See notes 17 and 39, above. Several prioresses were named Aygline, which may partly explain chronological errors on the part of the older authors.

⁴³ Jacques de Vitry, *Historia occidentalis*, ed. J. F. Hinnebusch (Fribourg, 1972), pp. 116–17.

⁴⁴ For some alternative interpretations of the evidence, see Warren, *Spiritual Economies*; Roberta Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: the Other Monasticism* (Leicester, 1995), pp. 106–56.

⁴⁵ At Alguair in Catalonia the *numerus clausus* was fixed at the foundation of the house, in 1250, at 20 sisters: *CH*, 2, p. 692, no. 2528. In 1297 the number of sisters at Fieux was limited to 12 (*ibid.*, 3, p. 716, no. 4375). The *numerus* of 39 at Beaulieu made it a particularly important monastery. The fixed *numerus*, intended to prevent the house admitting more sisters than it could support, could actually exacerbate its financial problems as it was unable to admit all the wealthy patrons who wished to join.

⁴⁶ The essential passages of this bull are translated and discussed in Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, *L'Église et les femmes* (Turnhout, 1997), pp. 314–17.

saint (M 108), and her reception of lay people of both sexes (M 9, 17, 21, 22, and so on), even of a person as suspect as a *jongleur* or travelling minstrel. She herself knew difficult carnal temptations, which form part of hagiographical cliché; the character of the devil in the *Vita* assured Fleur that no real barriers prevented her from giving way to temptation. He reminded her of the command 'Go forth and multiply', and vaunted the joys of procreation before her; it seems to have been child's play to commit the sin of the flesh and then obtain pardon for it (V 3). Would he have been wasting his time if the nuns had been double-locked inside their house as they were after the Council of Trent? This could have reflected the relatively lax situation borne out elsewhere in the late Middle Ages, even among Hospitaller sisters themselves.⁴⁷ It goes without saying that Fleur was not among these nuns who went astray.

What sort of saint did Fleur represent? She stood between tradition and new developments. Fleur joined a tradition as ancient as Christianity. Apart from martyrdom, she had nothing to envy in Saints Agnes or Cecilia whom Fleur saw in glory in Paradise (V 7), although we should note that the garments which were reserved for her in Paradise were *vermeil*, crimson, the colour of martyrdom, and not white, the colour of virginity (V 13)! As with Saints Agnes and Cecilia, her *vita* mentions her supposedly noble origin, her training in piety by a devoted mother, the beauty of the future saint, a paternal desire to marry her off and her refusal of the imposed marriage owing to a precocious and irresistible attraction to marriage with Christ. Fleur, according to the text, was a perfect example of the *puella senex*, *savia femna* (that is, old before her time), at first fleeing from childish games and then from contact with men, so much was she devoted to virginity and reluctant to hear about anything except 'God, Mary and the saints'. She learnt how to read in order to be able to say the Hours. The virtues which she cultivated in the cloister were equally classical: virginity, humility, obedience, punctual attendance at the offices, perfect respect for the sacraments of the Church (V 19), abstinence, drastic privation from sleep, prayer and contemplation. Over and above these *topoi* it seems that her early years were very difficult, firstly because of the demon of lust and especially because, before she became an object of admiration, she was misunderstood and cruelly rejected. Her wild rushings through the cloister, her uncoordinated movements, her raised arms, eyes looking heavenwards, weeping like a Magdalene – the comparison is from her own period – her powerlessness to confide in anyone about her tortures, all at first led her to be excluded from the community. The demonstrations of her distress were so contrary to monastic sobriety that the sisters and the religious men who visited the monastery believed that she was mad and that

⁴⁷ Luttrell, 'Margarida d'Erill'. For other female houses, see Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries* (Cambridge, 1922), and my thesis *Le Monachisme féminin dans la société de son temps. La Celle-lès-Brignoles (XIe-début XVIe siècles)* (Paris, 1989).

she was in danger of sinking into despair, a sin beyond pardon, a threat brandished by the devil in person (V 3). Then the divine consolations appeared which became her daily bread and soon compelled collective veneration. Most innovative was the place that the Crucified played in her spiritual progress.

Fleur did not experience embraces in the Saviour's arms, but she took her place in the sorrowful religious trend characteristic of the late Middle Ages. Borrowing the appearance of an angel painted on the vaulted ceiling of the cloister, the suffering Christ appeared to her during three months and delivered her from her tribulations (V 4). But she had internalized the torments of the Passion so strongly that she easily joined the ranks of the great stigmatics of the late Middle Ages, starting with Saint Francis for whom she also had a special devotion (M 23).⁴⁸ On Fridays she suffered the five wounds. But her 'compassion', in the precise sense, translated itself into unique symptoms. She did not receive the stigmata outwardly but, in a way, from the inside out, because she integrated the cross into herself: its crosspiece tore open her right side, causing her to spit blood and at last bringing about her death (V 4 and 20). Her power of empathy led her to follow fervently the whole liturgical cycle exalting the mysteries of the redemption (Annunciation, Nativity – when the Virgin gave Fleur the Child to hold – Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, the feasts of Mary: V 14, 17, 22, and so on) and especially the sorrowful mysteries (V 17, 20) of Holy Week, which brought her a multiplication of charismatic experiences: ecstasies, levitations, celestial visions, knowledge of the past, present and future, and the gift of prophecy. She read hearts and was instructed by Heaven about the most secret conversions as well as the great events of the world (V 11). She displayed equally both the devotion and the mystical Eucharistic experiences of the great mystics from the thirteenth century onwards; she took communion on Sundays and on the great feast days of the Church (V 9). She aspired so greatly to mystical Eucharistic experiences that on two occasions her confessor points out her pious lies, but without imputing her action to sin, which is curious. She made herself ill so as better to enjoy in her bed the indescribable sweetnesss she was experiencing, and that at the risk of diabolical temptation.

If the saints whom she favoured – Saint John the Baptist, accredited protector of her Order, the Virgin, Peter (V 23), the archangel Gabriel, Cecilia, Nicholas,⁴⁹ Francis (V 23) – were not an original collection, the extent to which angels dominated her thought-world was extremely original in comparison to other female saints of her time. She felt herself continually surrounded by them (V 23). An angel personally gave her communion with a piece of the host which had been spirited away for her from a priest of Fieux who was in the course of saying mass, to the

⁴⁸ An unfortunately undatable painting from the church of Saint-Julien which disappeared during the Revolution showed her with the stigmata: Bouange, p. 145.

⁴⁹ Saint Nicholas of Myra, patron of sailors. Given the maritime activities of the Order of Saint John during the fourteenth century, it is interesting that Fleur extolled him as a protector of virginity and of humility and not as a patron of sailors: see p. 230, n. 68.

great alarm of the unfortunate man (V 19). Angels conducted her in the Beyond, favouring her with knowledge of Purgatory and Hell, but particularly with a vision of Heaven, and also with gifts of celestial objects which were marks of her election while on earth and of her future glory. A sword (V 6) was sent to her so that she might defend herself against temptations. In those times of infatuation with orders of chivalry, she received the symbol of her own Order, the sumptuous cross of 'the Order of the terrestrial Paradise of Enoch and Elijah', brought by celestial messengers (V 14). She was permitted to see the wonderful tree of Paradise, all covered in blossom, with its roots in the earth and touching the sky, topped by an eagle with its wings spread out in the sign of a cross, bearing on its breast a brilliant carbuncle, shining like a mirror, in which she saw the glory and the ranks of the angels and of the elect (V 10). An angel offered her a 'drink of salvation' in a golden goblet (V 8).⁵⁰ In a guided visit, she was shown the heavenly throne, set with precious stones, which would be hers for eternity, and on two occasions she was carried even higher, because she had shown proof of perfect humility (V 13). The angels also made her try on sumptuously cut flame-coloured garments, which were destined to be hers (V 13).

Such descriptions reveal the frantic admiration of the confessor, who did not shrink from hyperbole. He reports apparently without hesitation the opinion of the wandering minstrel: if Christ had had two mothers, Fleur would have been the second: thus depicting Fleur as almost the equal of Mary (V 15). In a pantheon so well peopled with the blest, the confessor credited her with a grace only shared with Moses, for she saw the Divinity 'in semblance' (V 12). So much and so well that, already divine, accustomed to tasting such delights, she had difficulty in descending again to earth. She experienced long periods of anorexia (V 7), although this was also seen as a mystical manifestation that she called the liberating death from exile (V 24).⁵¹ One year she remained in permanent ecstasy from 1 November, All Saints, to 22 November, the feast of Saint Cecilia. In short, having passed through her early trials, Fleur would have known above all, besides the asceticism and the physical suffering, the certainty of being one of the elect, the illumination of understanding (V 5), the intoxication of the senses in the pleasure of the supernatural, visions gleaming with treasures beyond price, splendour, sweetness, brilliance, perfumes and melodies weaving the fabric of the *vita* (V 7, 9). But grace was added to these, not only to build up those around her but also to work miracles, inviting the question of when Fleur's sanctity was acknowledged.

⁵⁰ The conclusion of this story seemed to the seventeenth-century translator to be of such misplaced informality that he omitted it: when she wanted to look at what was left in the cup, the angel who brought her this elixir threw it in her face and took advantage of her surprise to slip away!

⁵¹ Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago, 1985); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987).

Her biographer did not describe the last instants of her life in detail, which is unusual. We should note also that the precise dates and the circumstances of her death and of her translation were set out only in later additions to her biography, in the list of miracles. However, the biographer did note that during her life the community had discovered her exceptional gifts: the spirit of prophecy, ecstasy, levitations, a glowing halo around her body (V 16, 17, 21, 107) and other miracles. She died in an fragrance of sanctity in the literal sense, proven by olfactory and visual phenomena (M 63) and the miracles occurred during the year which followed her death (M 72, 73, 87).⁵² Her body was fragrant when in 1360, 13 years later, the coffin was opened.⁵³ We may assume, therefore, that it had escaped long-term decomposition. It is not known whether the body was broken up before being buried or only after the elevation of the relics, but it was stated that one of the saint's bones worked miracles at Figeac (M 57), and that her garments (M 58, 59, 78, 84) were endowed with *virtus*, without our knowing exactly where these relics were distributed and preserved. There is no doubt that the translation, on which we possess so little detail but which it was remembered had fixed the saint's feast day down the centuries, boosted the cult and increased the miracles which occurred at the tomb, in the sanctuary or at some distance (fig. 8.1).⁵⁴

The anonymous writer who gave an account of the miracles which occurred during a period of more than a century assures us that he could not recount them all (M 104). The list is therefore approximate. We should note also that the registration of these miracles was very informal in comparison to other collections of miracles. This was no official register, held by the guardians of the sanctuary, authenticated by witnesses with declarations under oath set in chronological order.⁵⁵ The miracles were rarely dated or given a location; most of those miraculously cured were anonymous and referred to only indirectly.⁵⁶ As they were, they lent themselves to a summary analysis by type and an enumeration of cases, for comparison with those supplied in the classic studies.⁵⁷

⁵² Although it is unclear whether certain miracles recorded as occurring 'in the octave', that is in the eight days following, occurred after her death or after her translation (M 64, 65).

⁵³ After the translation, the shrine was placed in the church on a platform to the left of the altar: Bouange, p. 140. It is not known where the body was before this. It also appears that there is no certain evidence to decide between those authors who talk of the nuns' cemetery (Jalenques, p. 19), or of 'the low tomb in the ancient church' (Bouange, p. 108).

⁵⁴ For an evaluation of the modern cult of the saint, see Brunel's introduction and his bibliography.

⁵⁵ The first miracle was dated 1456, while the miracles at her death were not described until M 63; the final two (M 108, 109) recall a miracle *in vita*. The translation was noted long before the description of her death (M 46).

⁵⁶ In M 25 a religious man from Montpellier is cured; M 26: 'Same thing for several men from Montpellier and other places'.

⁵⁷ Nicole Herrmann-Mascard, *Le Culte des saints: Formation coutumière d'un droit* (Paris, 1975); Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval*

Let us begin with the miracles produced during her lifetime. Apart from her familiarity with the celestial world, some people received a more precise indication of her sanctity from the prodigious graces heaped upon her, seeing her flanked by two angels or receiving a shower of glowing coals (V 9 and 10); two Franciscans on the road were drawn to the monastery by a mysterious force (M 108); her prayer obtained the cure of a knight's epileptic son and of other persons (V 21, 22); she drove a demon out of another by holding Saint John's Gospel over the person's head (M 105). She obtained the death of two of her detractors (V 16 and M 106), one of whom was struck by Saint Anthony's fire.⁵⁸

The distribution of *post mortem* miracles is unsurprising. They were dominated by those bearing on the health of the body. There were 69 clear healings, six childbirths at full term, two conceptions granted to women wishing to have children, as against one single healing of a soul. The healings represented 69.3 per cent of the total. 12.4 per cent dealt with protection against the English and men-at-arms; 4.5 per cent dealt with interventions against the judicial machinery; 4.5 per cent of miracles guaranteed the protection of property, such as lost oxen or a house or threshing floor protected against fire. The saint was first and foremost one who heals sickness of the body: epilepsy, here called 'St Namphase's evil' after a saint of the Carolingian period whose body is venerated in the crypt of the church of Caniac (canton of Labastide-Murat, arrond. Gourdon) (M 1, 21, 68, 80, 81); blindness (M 2, 8, 47, 49, 57, 58, 100); aphasia (M 53, 65); deafness (M 79); paralysis (M 38, 52, 88); or indeterminate maladies: headache (M 4, 7, 78, 101); heartache or an ache in the side (M 13, 33, 37, 45, 50); a sore hand (M 54); a sore arm (M 27, 60); a sore leg (M 36, 94); fever (M 11, 42, 61, 90); plague (M 70, 102?);⁵⁹ accident (M 20, 29, 82,

England (London, 1977); André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen-Age d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome, 1981); Pierre-André Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XIe-XIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1985).

⁵⁸ The only miracle attributed to Fleur by Bosio, p. 18, is the miracle of the roses, which justified her own first name, 'Flower' (Fleur). In reality, the saint's first name is the female form of Flour, the patron saint of Auvergne. Cathala-Coture rectifies Bosio's error by stating that Fleur (flower) was certainly her name, but the miracle of the roses led to her being called Whiteflower. A nineteenth-century stained glass window in the church of Saint-Julien represents this miracle: Juillet, p. 15. The prioress surprised the saint handing out bread to the poor during a famine; when she opened her apron the bread had been transformed into roses. This miracle would illustrate the hospitaller vocation at Beaulieu, yet it is absent from our list. What is more, the same miracle is attributed to many other saints, such as Roseline de Villeneuve: above, p. 217, n. 26.

⁵⁹ The second case is doubtful (a 'bosse' in the throat could be an abscess). It is not known why *Les vies de saints* records that she performed miracles 'especially during the plague', unless this is based on a dubious equation of the phrase 'horrible mal' (horrible illness: V 17) with the plague. The first epidemic of plague hit Quercy in 1348, after the saint's death. The 'horrible illness' from which *de son vivant* (during her lifetime), she cured several people, is more likely to have been epilepsy. The plague struck Figeac again in 1361,

85, 103); or simply the desperate state of those who were on the point of death (M 15, 16, 25, 39, 43, 44, 51, 66, 67, 71, 72, 73, 77, 86, 87, 89, 91). The conditions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries increased the need for protection of people and property, both private and collective: as in the case of the *castra* (M 23, 96) protected against the rabble of soldiers who pillaged, held people to ransom, exercised reprisals, tortured and executed.⁶⁰

It seems more original to divide the miracles on the basis of the sex of the beneficiaries. In only four cases is the sex of the person miraculously cured unknown. In all the others, women were much more favoured than men: 42 to 25. Seven of the 42 were women saved with their newborn baby in a dangerous childbirth. It seems, then, that the saint was selective in her assistance. If we divide the miracles by the social station of those involved, which was not often indicated, we may note that nobles were over-represented among the masculine beneficiaries (squires, knights, lords, barons: M 4, 7, 8, 41, 52, 61, 71, 87), and religious men (M 25, 27, 36, 60), plus donats of the Hospital. Social standing was far less often recorded for the women, which was normal: there were three nobles (M 1, 39, 56), one townswoman (M 38), two religious women (M 59, 91).

The content of the 'miracle-contract' that was formed between the believer and the saint corresponded to well known types. The miracle could take place at a distance, on the simple formulation of a vow, particularly in prison where the chains fell off when the prisoner had taken his vow, or on the threshing floor which was protected against fire when the saint was invoked, or on the bed where the sick person was lying, whether the vower made the vow in person or not, according to the circumstances, such as physical state, age and so forth. The miracle might take place at a distance but, in such cases, was through contact with a bone or some other relic, either representative of the saint or having had contact with the saint.⁶¹ Miracles also took place on the saint's sepulchre in the church at Beaulieu, sometimes after incubation – that is, sleeping on the sepulchre (M 20, 37). Propitiatory or grateful

Cahors in 1384, the scourge returning on average every 20 years: *Histoire du Quercy*, ed. Jean Lartigaut (Privat, 1993), pp. 125–6.

⁶⁰ See André Leguai, *La Guerre de Cent Ans* (Paris, 1974), and Nicholas Wright, *Knights and Peasants: The Hundred Years War in the French Countryside* (Woodbridge, 1998). Among other provinces, Quercy had been ceded in full sovereignty to the English by the treaty of London of 1358. From 1369 the French reoccupied Rouergue and Quercy almost entirely, but the war continued to rage. In about 1390 a priest stated that during the whole of his life (he was 35) he had seen only war in the land of Cahors: Leguai, p. 69. 'English' must be taken in the generic sense. Taking into account the complexity of the political and military situation, 'French' (mentioned at M 45) may refer to Gascons, Bordelais, Béarnais, and so on. See *Histoire du Quercy*, ed. Lartigaut, pp. 126–9: the map of areas destroyed by the war shows the damage to our area, north of the River Lot. Three or four generations had suffered from the war. Reconstruction began from 1440. The Abbey of Figeac was so ruined in 1435 through the ravages of military bands that it asked the pope to renew its indulgences (see above, p. 220, n. 41).

⁶¹ Herrmann-Mascard, p. 70.

offerings to the saint were noted only in around a quarter of the cases, but when they were, they were of a variety often noted in the literary genre. People took part in penitential practices, regularly through pilgrimage to the saint's tomb, often combined with fasting (M 35, 45, 68, 100), prayers (M 6, 37), mass (M 27) or mortifications (M 45, 68, 70, 100), which might involve, for instance, completing part of the pilgrimage barefooted (M 61, 67) or on the knees (M 14). Some promised money (M 18, 19, 31), oats (M 19), oil (M 36), or more frequently a quantity of wax in various forms. Such wax might be an undetermined *mole* or heap (M 44, 52, 63, 88, 98), or an *ex voto* figure, an *emagena* or image in wax (M 1, 6, 13, 17, 20, 31, 61, 75, 80, 87, 91, 95). This was an effigy that represented not the saint, as Clovis Brunel thought,⁶² but sometimes the sick person, such as a child in wax (M 92, 99), or the animal which was rescued, such as an ox in wax (M 97), or showing the sick part of the body, such as a hand (M 54), arm (M 60), leg (M 85, 94), ears (M 80) or eyes (M 2), or even a model of the thing being protected, such as a house or a castle in wax (M 23, 35). Again, it could represent the danger from which the vower wished to escape, such as a ladder in wax if the *castrum* which was surrounded by ladders remained unharmed, or shackles in wax (M 74), or of the object which had been stolen, such as a cup of wax for a silver cup (M 63). Sometimes it could even be an ornament in wax, such as a belt or a garland (M 47, 50). The quantity of wax promised was expressed in pounds weight or by a measure of length, *estedal* in Occitan (M 51, 61, 62, 65, 66, and so on), or, as Clovis Brunel has explained, a candle, a column or at least a wax-coated wick as tall as the supplicant, sometimes wound around the neck (M 42). Alongside the *estedal*, a shroud was a frequently promised offering (M 39, 42, 51, 62, 65, 66, 67, 70, 72, 73), which misled Brunel.⁶³ He saw in this *susari* 'a simple symbol'. However, a comparison with practices exactly contemporary with ours and in a close geographical and cultural region, at Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois in the west of France, removes all doubt over the object of this rite. When 'one hopes more for death than for life', for example in 1395, when 'Isabel was dead and they wished to lay her in the shroud', her father vowed his daughter to the saint, promising to give the said shroud; in the same way, in 1443, a father promised to bring the shroud of his child, 'in which he expected to bury her'.⁶⁴

It remains for us to measure the geographical extent of this cult (fig. 8.1). Most of the miracles occurred at the Hospital at Issendolus itself, the natural epicentre. The

⁶² Brunel, p. 11.

⁶³ Brunel, p. 11. The seventeenth-century Latin translation misled him even more as the Occitan term *susari* was rendered as *sindo* which means a cloth, often of silk, rather than a shroud. Montagnes, p. 267, corrected the editor's error; it is less evident, however, that (as he claims) what is meant is the cloth on which the sick person is lying, and which will act as a shroud.

⁶⁴ 'Livre des miracles de Sainte-Catherine de Fierbois (1395–1470)', ed. Y. Chauvin, *Archives Historiques du Poitou*, 60 (1976), nos 45 and 138. Most of these accounts are in the vernacular.

localities where many of the miracles were attested fall into a zone ten kilometres in radius around the Hospital: Gramat (M 41), Bio, Albiac, Aynac, Rueyres (M 55), Leyme, Le Bourg, Sonac; then a 25 kilometre zone including Gourdon (M 39), Les Fieux (V 19), Loubressac, Cornac, Lauresses, Figeac, Corn and Faycelles. The most distant regions were, to the south-west, Cahors, which was the see of the diocese, 45 kilometres away; to the south-east, Montpellier (M 25 and 26), more than 200 kilometres away; to the east, the Auvergne, with Maurs, Fleur's native town; to the north, Sarlat, and Limoges 120 km away; to the west, Saintes and Gascony.⁶⁵ We may note the concentration of miracles along the main roads, particularly the pilgrimage route from Figeac to Rocamadour, an important Marian cult-centre where Fleur was outshone by the Virgin.

Despite making a most careful study of the *vita* of the holy Hospitaller and of her miracles compiled in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we have not been able to establish her family origins nor the precise context of her entry into the religious life.⁶⁶ Fleur was the pearl of sanctity of medieval Beaulieu but the brilliant success

⁶⁵ One religious woman at the hospital was the sister of a lord of Limoges (M 93). For the beneficiaries of miracles at Montpellier, see M 25 and 26. It should not be concluded from this that Fleur was totally unknown elsewhere. Brunel, p. 10 n. 5, complemented by Montagnes, p. 251, reports invocations to Saint Fleur in association with Saint Barbara, patroness of artisans, noted in their day in Bas-Maine, Brittany, Mayenne and Languedoc for driving away storms.

⁶⁶ In brief, Fleur has been confused with Roseline de Villeneuve, a Carthusian nun at La Celle-Roubaud, Var, who died in 1329: Gaussancourt, *Revue nobiliaire*. She has been called a Hospitaller nun at Fieux, not at Beaulieu: Cathala-Coture, 1, p. 231. To summarize the data in her biography according to the secondary historians: (1) birth: 1209 (Mesplède); c. 1261–62 (Bosio); end of the thirteenth century/beginning of the fourteenth (*Catholicisme, Vie des saints, DHGE*); c. 1300 (*Bibliotheca Sanctorum*); 1309–11 (Albe); c. 1309 (Lacarrière); 1309 (Bouange, Even, Jalenques). The date 1309 derives from a subtraction: 1347 (the date stated in the *corpus* and known by H. Amadiéu) minus 38 equals 1309, which demonstrates the impact of Bosio, who gave her a lifetime of 38 years, even though he had the saint dying in 1299. (2) Entry into the monastery: c. 1223 (Mesplède thus placed her at Beaulieu before the foundation of the house by the Thémînes); c. 1314 (*Bibliotheca Sanctorum*); 1322–24 (Albe, p. 192, states without giving any evidence that her admission took place during the abbacy of Agnès d'Aurillac, named during the intervention of the Master of the Hospital, Hélión de Villeneuve, in the contested election of 1322–24; see also Jalenques). (3) Death: 1347 (Mesplède); c. 1270 (Cathala-Coture, 1, p. 231); 1267 (*Bréviaire de Cahors*, published in 1746; see also Bouange, p. 581 and Brunel, p. 6); 1299 (Bosio, Chastelain, Gaussancourt, Hélyot, Delaville le Roulx, *Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte*, p. 301; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), p. 272). Delaville le Roulx, who knew the sources better than anyone but was influenced, no doubt, by Bosio, did not note Fleur's absence from the chapter of 1298 and placed her death in the following year: *CH*, 1, p. ccxxvii. The day of her death is unknown, but many authors continue to confuse it with the day of her elevation, '11 June, St Barnabas's

of her monastery was due to the Thémînes. The piety and the generosity of this family from Quercy led them to found a hospital, to take religious vows there and to negotiate its affiliation to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem in 1259. Their loyalty to the house continued for several generations. The family provided several prioresses to the Hospital, but above all it founded the only two female houses of Hospitallers in France: Beaulieu and Fieux. The limit on the total number of members which was laid down in 1298 for this, the most important of the female houses of the Order in France which itself had far more members than the masculine commanderies, was, like the saint's scruples about living in affluence, evidence of vigorous growth. The zenith of the monastery came during Saint Fleur's time, before 1347. Then the 'evils of the time' were unleashed, notably the epidemic of plague and the war.

But what was especially Hospitaller about this female monastery and this saint? It is difficult to turn them into paragons of Hospitaller virtue, and they were even less clearly military. A creature 'more angelic than earthly', as the *vita* stated, Fleur hardly ever dealt directly with her compatriots except by way of her supernatural powers. Her piety, centred on the mysteries of the Incarnation and more particularly on the Passion, did not direct her towards active service. Nor was there any echo of the Orient in this dossier. Admittedly, by this time the Holy Land had been lost, but nothing filters through of the crusading projects of recovery nor of the Order's difficulties after it had withdrawn.⁶⁷ Were the Hospitallers in the French commanderies appreciative of the mystical tendencies of the saint and of her heroic virtues? There is no evidence at all. Was this chance? Fleur performed miracles as far away as Montpellier but not at Saint-Gilles, nor at any port, nor on Cyprus nor Rhodes.⁶⁸ The enterprise of her confessor in composing her *vita* and the distribution of that *vita* later secured by the editor of the miracles, whose collection covered more than a century and a half, appear to have been individual initiatives rather than a propaganda campaign orchestrated by the hierarchy. The local cult also appears to have been spontaneous, rather than deliberately organized to bring donations in to the monastery or to bring symbolic profit to the whole Order. Study of the dossier confirms the dominant impression given by female monasticism in the late Middle

day' (M 46). These writers variously give the length of her life between the 38 or 39 years stated by Bosio and over 60 years if she was born in the late-thirteenth century and entered the house in the early fourteenth century, which seems more plausible. (4) Elevation of her relics: 1270 (*Propre* of Cahors: see Bouange, p. 581). Actual date: 1360. In short, nothing precise is known beyond the dates supplied by the medieval *corpus*: her presence in the monastery by 1327, her death in 1347 and her translation on 11 June 1360. The rest is speculation.

⁶⁷ On the projects of recovery and on the Hospital after the loss of the Holy Land see, for example, Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades: From Lyons to Alcazar, 1274–1580* (Oxford, 1992).

⁶⁸ It is not known on what Amadiéu, followed by Jalenques and Juillet, p. 109, based his assertion that the Knights of Rhodes and of Malta benefitted from her miracles. Such miracles are not found in the surviving documentation.

Ages. The success of an individual should not lead us to overlook the absence of anything original in the houses which welcomed them, even though these houses had many more members than their masculine equivalents. Fleur, local protector, owed her charisma more to her personal virtues of contemplation and mysticism than to the specific vocation of the Order to which her house belonged.

Chapter 9

The Female Hospitallers of San Bevignate at Perugia: 1325–c. 1507*

Francesco Tommasi

In the majority of regular orders and congregations it was common for there to be a female branch parallel to the older, male institution. The Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem and other major religious organizations of a military or military-hospitaller nature, such as the Templars¹ and the Teutonic Order,² were no exception

* Editors' note: this study originally appeared as 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate dell'Ordine di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano (secoli XIV–XVI)', in *Templari e Ospitalieri in Italia: la Chiesa di San Bevignate a Perugia*, ed. Mario Roncetti, Pietro Scarpellini and Francesco Tommasi (Perugia, 1987); its three documents in appendix are not reproduced below. The whole volume and its illustrations provide the broad context. The original, marginally revised by the author, is translated and abridged by Anthony Luttrell; more precise archive references may be found in the original.

Author's note: The origins of the Hospitaller sisters have been studied by Joseph Delaville le Roulx and by Jonathan Riley-Smith, and new interpretations would require systematic further research; the introductory section of this study of a particular house aims, therefore, to summarize accepted general notions rather than to discuss obscure or controversial particular points. This work owes much to Don Costanzo Tabarelli OSB, the archivist of San Pietro at Perugia, for his precious information and advice. Thanks go also to Anthony Luttrell, Irene Topai and Giorgio Caldieron, the last two respectively Librarian and Archivist of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

¹ Joaquín Miret y Sans, *Les Cases de Templiers y Hospitalers en Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1910), pp. 222–3; *Le Dossier de l'Affaire des Templiers*, ed. Georges Lizerand, 2nd edn (Paris, 1964), pp. 158, 160; Beatrice Lees, *Records of the Templars in England in the Twelfth Century* (London, 1935), p. 210; *L'Archivio Capitolare della Cattedrale di Mantova*, ed. P. Torelli (Verona, 1926), p. 391 (no. cclxxxi); B. Dudik, 'Über die Deutsch-Ordens-Schwester', *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Classe*, 16 (1855), 308–9.

² F. Salles, *Annales de l'Ordre Teutonique ou de Sainte-Marie-de-Jérusalem* (Paris, 1887), pp. 440–42; A. Triller, 'Katharina Mulner Deutschordensschwester in Marienwerder um 1400', *Festschrift M. Tumlér* (Bad Godesberg, 1967), pp. 185–90; E. Gruber, *Deutschordensschwester im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Bonn and Godesberg, 1971), pp. 1–5; H. Limburg, 'Schwestern, Halbschwester und Halbbrüder des Deutschen Ordens im Mittelalter', in *Von Akkon bis Wien: Studien zur Deutschordensgeschichte von 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Udo Arnold (Marburg, 1978), pp. 14–28; K. Wieser, 'Ordine

to this rule. However, the *sorores* mentioned from the twelfth century onwards in connection with the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem were not attached to any military order; in fact no Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre existed at that time.³

The voluntary association of individual females, or even of married couples, with male Hospitaller houses, within which they served as nurses, cleaners or washerwomen, was an early development possibly dating to the Order's earliest origins in Syria. Similar forms of affiliation to the Hospital on the part of *famule*, *oblatae* or other women were found in Europe at least from the second half of the twelfth century. The result was a number of mixed monasteries consisting of a male Hospitaller house in which some female sisters lived and functioned.⁴ The most common way in which pious women might form themselves into a religious community which would subsequently be absorbed into the Order was through spontaneously created groups founded through the initiative of lay people, whether they were nobles, magnates or simply bourgeois. This practice existed as early as the twelfth century and continued until the fifteenth.⁵ There were notable examples in Italy at Florence, where at the end of the fourteenth century five gentlewomen founded a Hospitaller house,⁶ and at Perugia, where a female convent had been established more than half a century earlier.

From the time of their earliest appearance, the absence of any precise strategy or overall policy towards these female foundations seems to have been characteristic of the Hospitallers, a factor which undoubtedly influenced the European diffusion of the Order's female houses, causing it to appear slower and less planned than the spread of other contemporary women's religious institutions. At the end of the twelfth century there were no less than eight female Hospitaller houses across an area covering the modern England, Denmark, Bohemia, France, Spain and Italy. A hundred years or so later the number had doubled and it continued to increase

Teutonico', in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, 6 (Rome, 1980), col. 802–6; above, p. 233, n. 1; below, p. 248, n. 68.

³ Kaspar Elm, 'Fratres et Sorores Sanctissimi Sepulchri: Beiträge zu Fraternitas, Familia und weiblichem Religiosentum im Umkreis des Kapitels vom Hlg. Grab', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 9 (1975), 287–8; reprinted in his *Umbilicus Mundi: Beiträge zur Geschichte Jerusalems, der Kreuzzüge des Kapitels vom Hlg. Grab in Jerusalem und der Ritterorden* (Bruges, 1998), pp. 139–40. Kaspar Elm is preparing a major volume on these canons and canonesses.

⁴ Joseph Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers en Terre Sainte et à Chypre: 1100–1310* (Paris, 1904), pp. 299–300; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus: c. 1050–1310* (London, 1967), p. 241; Miret y Sans, pp. 207–22, *et passim*.

⁵ Joseph Delaville le Roulx, 'Les Hospitalières de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem', *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres: Comptes Rendus*, ser. 4, 22 (1894), 139, 141–2 (repr. in *Mélanges sur l'ordre de S. Jean de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1910), no. 12); *CH*, 1, pp. ccxxiii–ccxxx.

⁶ Below, p. 235, n. 12.

significantly during the fourteenth century and thereafter.⁷ As the apparently original institution of the mixed convent faced the gradual advance of other types of religious houses, some of the *sorores* were transferred to independent female houses, and the women seem to have lost their specific hospitaller functions and devoted themselves to an isolated, cloistered life of contemplation in *clausura*.⁸ Though the women were subject to the Rule of the Hospital, they naturally needed special arrangements to suit their female status.⁹

The Distribution of the Italian Female Houses: the Umbrian Predominance

It was no accident that Pisa, one of the very earliest Italian towns to have a male Hospitaller house,¹⁰ also had the oldest and most venerable Italian monastery of female Hospitallers for the origins of which there is trustworthy evidence. It was there, in San Giovanni dei Freri, that Ubaldesca da Calcinaia exercised the virtues for which she was canonized after her death in 1205/1206.¹¹ Other female houses were at Genoa, at least from some time in the first 30 years of the thirteenth century, at Penne, either before 1230 or from 1291, and at Florence, from 1392.¹² In numerical terms, however, Umbria was predominant, with two female houses both dating from the fourteenth century: San Giovanni at Monteleone near Spoleto and San Bevignate at Perugia. Apart from the fact that both these *domus* had a founder

⁷ CH, 1, pp. ccxxii–ccxxx; Riley-Smith, p. 241; E. Albe, 'Les Religieuses Hospitalières de l'Ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem au Diocèse de Cahors', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France*, 27 (1941), 181–2.

⁸ Cf. Riley-Smith, p. 241.

⁹ Below, p. 245, n. 54; Luttrell – Nicholson, Chapter 1, pp. 29–31.

¹⁰ The Hospital had its Pisan church/commandery of Santo Sepolcro certainly long before 1218: *Le Carte del Monastero di San Venerio del Tino*, 2: 1200–1300, ed. G. Falco (Turin, 1934), p. 32.

¹¹ S. Razzi, *Vite di Santi e Sante Toscani* (Florence, 1593), pp. 244–50; *Acta Sanctorum, Maii VI* (Antwerp, 1688), pp. 854–9; CH, 1, pp. ccxxv–ccxxvi; *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, 12 (Rome, 1969), cols 731–2.

¹² CH, 1, pp. ccxxv–ccxxvi. On the Genoese sisters, L. Tacchella, *I Cavalieri di Malta in Liguria* (Genoa, 1977), pp. 51, 54–5, 72, 285; *Idem*, *I 'Donati' nella Storia del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta* (Verona, 1986), pp. 60, 62–3, 65. On the foundation at Penne (Santa Maria di Borgonuovo: 10 May 1291): CH, no. 4154; see also *ibid.*, no. 4508; *Rationes Decimarum Italiae nei secoli XIII e XIV: Aprutium-Molisium*, ed. P. Sella (Vatican, 1936), no. 3392; according to L. Di Vestea, *Penne Sacra* (Teramo, 1923), pp. 214–15, and to A. Foschini, 'Le Religiose Gerosolimitane dell'Ordine dei Cavalieri di Malta e la Chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista nella Città di Penne', *Rivista Abruzzese*, 2 part 2 (1949), 4–9, an autonomous house of Hospitaller sisters at Penne, adjoining the hospital of San Nicola de Ferratis which they managed, existed in the early thirteenth century. On Florence, E. Viviani Della Robbia, *Nei Monasteri fiorentini* (Florence, 1946), pp. 105–47; W. and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt a-M., 1955), pp. 272–84; O. Fantozzi Micali and P. Roselli, *Le Soppressioni dei Conventi a Firenze* (Florence, 1980), pp. 146–7.

whose place of origin was that in which they were located, they shared common juridical characteristics in that both were private foundations or *Eigenklöster*, which in canon law were houses *in juspatronatus*. The legal status of monasteries of this sort is in general well known¹³ but it has been neglected in the case of the military orders.

The women's house at Monteleone di Spoleto was founded before 1364 by Fr Napoleone Tiberti, who as Prior of Venice from 1330 to 1364 governed the Hospital in the area of the modern Veneto, that is Trentino, Alto Adige and Friuli, and of Emilia-Romagna.¹⁴ He endowed it with goods from his family¹⁵ which belonged to the ancient nobility long dominant in the area of Spoleto.¹⁶ Various senior officers of

¹³ B. Kurtscheid, *Historia Iuris Canonici*, 2nd edn (Rome, 1951), pp. 276–8; H. Feine, *Kirchliche Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 1, 3rd edn (Weimar, 1955), pp. 147–66; W. Kurze, 'Monasteri e Nobiltà nella Tuscia altomedievale', in *Atti del 5º Congresso internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 1973), pp. 344–7.

¹⁴ Joseph Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers à Rhodes jusqu'à la Mort de Philibert de Naillac: 1310–1421* (Paris, 1913; repr. London, 1974), pp. 77–8, 140, 145; Anthony Luttrell, 'The Hospitallers' Hospice of Santa Caterina at Venice: 1358–1451' in Luttrell (1978), no. IX, pp. 374, 380, 382; on Piliolo da Spoleto, *familiaris* of Fr Napoleone Vice-Prior of Venice in 1324, and *dominus Armeleo de Tibertis de Spuleto*, evidently kinsmen of Fr Napoleone: Spoleto, Archivio Capitolare [ACS], pergamene, 588.

¹⁵ 'Gabriel Tyberti de monte Leone testis praedictus suo iuramento testificando dixit ... quo audivit dici antiquis temporibus quod quidam dominus Neapuleo de monte Leone olim ut dicitur prior Sancti Iohannis de venetiis: et de religione. fredorum? [=Freriorum] fecit fieri dictam ecclesiam [sc. Sancti Iohannis]: et eam dotavit ... Franciscus antonii chirmignani de monte Leone ... vidit et cognovit quandam monialem nomine Margaritam monialem dicti monasterii [sc. Sancti Iohannis] et quod vulgariter dicebatur Margarita de San Iohanni': P. De Angelis, 'Un Frammento di Sacra Visita nella Diocesi Spoletina del 1465', *Archivio per la Storia ecclesiastica dell'Umbria*, 3 (1916), 457 *et passim*. According to the second witness, recalling events 60 years earlier, the house was still inhabited by the sisters in the first years of the fifteenth century. A *preceptorial* *Montis Leonis*, united to those of Norcia and Arquata del Tronto, belonged to the Hospital in 1453: Valletta, National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order of St. John, Cod. 375, fol. 88v. The official catalogue of churches, monasteries and other religious houses in the Diocese of Spoleto, originally dating to 1393 but several times revised, mentioned the church of San Ioannis de Monteleone which was 'sine cura et unita Ecc. S. Nicolai et Plebi': L. Fausti, 'Le Chiese della Diocesi Spoletina nel XIV Secolo', *Archivio per la Storia ecclesiastica dell'Umbria*, 1 (1913), 183.

¹⁶ A. Fabbri, in *Leonessa e il suo Santo*, 13 (1976), 40–45, 65–9, 95–6, 124. On Giovanni *Francisci de Tibertis* from Monteleone, the Franciscan inquisitor in the Spoletan province in 1333; Sister Filippa *de Tibertis*, Abbess of Santa Caterina di Monteleone in 1349; and Francesco de Nicola *de Thiberti* (1322?): P. Monacchia, *Regesti delle Pergamene di S. Francesco al Prato di Perugia: 1245–1777* (Santa Maria degli Angeli, 1984), p. 83; M. Sensi, 'Incarcerate e Recluse in Umbria nei secoli XIII e XIV: un Bizzocaggio centro-italiano', in *Il Movimento religioso femminile in Umbria nei secoli XIII–XIV*, ed. R. Rusconi (Florence, 1984), p. 113 n. 82; *Chiese e Conventi degli Ordini Mendicanti in Umbria nei secoli XIII–XIV: Archivi della Valnerina*, ed. V. Giorgetti (Perugia, 1984), p. 13; above, n. 14.

the Order¹⁷ thus guaranteed the sisters' livelihood, while the church of San Giovanni was built through Fr Napoleone's 'piety and expense'. Its construction may not have been directly connected to the introduction of the Hospitaller sisters to Monteleone; it may not have been completed before they arrived there. According to the *Visita Lascaris* of 1712, the original occupants were Franciscan sisters living under the Rule of Santa Chiara who were temporarily installed in San Giovanni five years after they had left their house at Norcia.¹⁸ When this occurred is uncertain; the date of 1310 given in the 1712 visitation would have to be advanced by more than a decade if the year 1322, given by documents of dubious authenticity, were correct.¹⁹ In any case, the monastery of San Giovanni had presumably been deserted by the Franciscan sisters before 1349, in which year they seem to have returned to their original house of Santa Caterina.²⁰ That would have left San Giovanni available to the Hospitaller sisters, but exactly when they were installed is uncertain. The only evidence for their presence at Monteleone comes in mid-fifteenth century references to a Hospitaller *preceptoria Montis Leonis* and to an unidentified female house of San Giovanni, which would have been there at some point after 1349.²¹

In 1358 Fr Napoleone Tiberti also founded the Hospitallers' hospital or hospice of Santa Caterina at Venice.²² Unlike his foundation at Monteleone which was the result of a personal initiative, the Venice hospice perhaps sprang from a possible general policy of expanding and reinforcing the Hospital's charitable structure. The church and convent at Monteleone were the work of a religious personality who, in endowing a religious institution, was acting in the same way as any pious lay benefactor; he was apparently concerned for the safety of his soul rather than for the enrichment of his Order. Somewhat similar motives lay behind the creation at Perugia of a female Hospitaller house founded on the initiative of private citizens whose work and economic interests kept them far from their homeland at the papal Curia in Avignon.

¹⁷ Fr Fr[ancesco?] Tiberti, Commander of Bologna, 1314: Delaville le Roulx, *Les Hospitaliers à Rhodes*, p. 33 n. 5; Fr Leonardo, successively Prior of Venice, Visitor in the West, Germany and Scandinavia, and Prior of England, 1312–35: *ibid.*, pp. 7, 21–3, 32–5, 37, 39, 53–4, 68–9, 73, 77; Fr Pietro, Commander of Monticella, Collalto and Campagna (Treviso), 1331: Malta. Cod. 280, fols 68–68v; he was Vice-Prior of Venice in 1345: *Lettere di Mercanti a Pignol Zucchello: 1336–1350*, ed. R. Morozzo Della Rocca (Venice, 1957), p. 32; Fr Giovanni de Tibertis de Monteleone, Commander of Santo Stefano di Reggio Emilia, at least from 1371 to 1380: Reggio Emilia, Archivio di Stato, Schedario Saccani, vol. 32, nos 1213/B, 1214/A.

¹⁸ Spoleto, Archivio Diocesano, *Visita Lascaris* (1712), 2, fols 84v–85v, with information 'ex manuscriptis et documentis authenticis, qui servantur in archiviiis tum terrae [sc. Montis Leonis], tum monasterii [sc. S. Catharine]'.
¹⁹ *Chiese e conventi*, ed. Giorgetti, p. 13.

²⁰ Sensi, p. 113 n. 82. Of the new transfer of the Clarisse, the *Visita Lascaris* noted 'Tandem (ignoratur annus) fuerunt hinc iterum restitute in pristino loco.'

²¹ Above, p. 236, n. 15.

²² Luttrell, 'Hospitallers' Hospice of Santa Caterina', 373–4, 382–3.

The Female House at San Bevinate: a Fortuitous Hospitaller Foundation

The rich Perugian businessman Rico or Enrico Corboli, his wife Caterina and his daughter Coluccia seem not to have had any special preference for the Order of Saint John. For them one order was the same as another; what chiefly interested them was that their community of pious women be subjected to a papally approved order with a rule under which they could profess and with customs they could observe. Such concerns and the fear of failing to obtain papal legitimization for their new institution were conditioned by the reforming policies of the thirteenth-century Church. These had culminated in 1298 with Boniface VIII's introduction into canon law of a constitution of the Council of Lyons of 1274 which, following the example of the Lateran Council of 1215, prohibited the founding of new orders and congregations for women religious and abolished those created after 1215.²³

The founders had little choice but to turn to the Hospitallers at a time when the most readily available place in or around Perugia for the introduction of the model of female religious life which they had in mind seemed to be the complex of buildings annexed to the suburban churches of San Girolamo and San Bevinate. These former Templar properties outside the town walls had passed to the Hospital in 1312 following the suppression of the Temple.²⁴ The founders' plans were facilitated by the Hospital's growing difficulties in organizing and managing, with a comparatively limited number of *milites* and priest-brethren, the numerous newly acquired Templar possessions, hospitals, churches and other places of worship. Although the concentration of several benefices in the hands of a single individual had for some time been common in the Order, it was clear that there were administrative problems, for example in the Priories of Venice and of Rome where in about 1330 a single Hospitaller might come to govern as many as four commanderies,²⁵ notwithstanding the fact that the accumulation of benefices was becoming a normal practice.²⁶

The Hospital was certainly short of priests. That was the case in the Priory of France in the late fourteenth century, possibly because the recruitment of priest-brethren was deliberately limited in order to reduce the costs of their

²³ *Sextus Decretalium*, III, 17, in *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, ed. E. Friedberg, 2 (Leipzig, 1881), cols 1054–5; *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo et al. (Friburg i. B., 1962), p. 218 (Lateran IV), p. 302 (Lyons II); cf. *Storia della Chiesa*, ed. H. Jedin, 5 part 1 (trans. Milan, 1983), p. 295.

²⁴ F. Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari a Perugia', *Bollettino della Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria*, 78 (1981), 22, 61–2.

²⁵ For the Priory of Rome: Biblioteca Vaticana, Cod. Vat. Lat. 10372, fols 22v, 24v, 38–38v; for that of Venice: Malta, Cod. 280, fols 66–68v. The phenomenon was less evident in the Venetian priory than in that of Rome.

²⁶ Urban VI's bull of 15 September 1383 in *Bullarium ... Romanorum Pontificum Amplissima Collectio*, ed. C. Cocquelines, vol. 3 part 2 (Rome, 1741), pp. 368–9.

maintenance.²⁷ An expansion of their numbers must generally have been considered necessary, for although a statute passed at Rhodes in 1335 prohibited the reception of brethren without the Master's licence, this ruling specifically exempted priests.²⁸ In Perugia alone the Hospital's churches and chapels to be served had tripled, with San Girolamo and San Bevignate being added to San Benedetto della Cupa.²⁹ In the surrounding *contado*, San Giustino d'Arno, acquired from the Temple, had 30 dependent churches,³⁰ while there was a church or chapel in each of the four nearby commanderies which the Hospital already held at San Giovanni di Pian di Carpine or Magione, at San Benedetto di Mugnano, at San Cristoforo del Chiugi and at Santa Maria Rossa.³¹

Rico Corboli initially made a proposal to the Hospital which might have been to its advantage had there been no impediment in canon law to the alienation of its property and if its economic policy had been less conservative; that was for the sale of the Commandery of San Girolamo and San Bevignate for a sum to be calculated according to the estimates of certain *boni viri*. The three benefactors' intention to endow and construct a house under an approved order and free from the Hospital's jurisdiction was thwarted when the Master of the Hospital declared that the alienation of a *domus* would be neither honourable nor useful, and was therefore theoretically unacceptable. In reality the Order was in those very years contradicting this assertion by selling properties in order to reduce the great debts it had contracted.³² Pope John XXII therefore appointed Cardinal Arnaud de Via as mediator to settle the question and, thanks to his good offices, an agreement for the

²⁷ Anne-Marie Legras, 'Les Effectives de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem dans le Prieuré de France en 1373', *Revue Mabillon*, 60 (1984).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 363.

²⁹ Possibly a Hospitaller establishment before 1261, San Benedetto della Cupa di Porta Santa Susanna was definitely one in about 1288: Perugia, Archivio di Stato [ASP], Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, S. Maria di Valdi ponte, perg., cass. 6, no. 799 (27 October 1261); ASP, Archivio Giudiziario, Capitano del Popolo, 1297–98, reg. 4, fol. 178v (27 January 1298).

³⁰ Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 10–11, 65–7.

³¹ Pian di Carpine: G. Riganelli, *Pian di Carpine: la Storia nella Microstoria* (Perugia, 1985); San Benedetto di Mugnano: Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 61; San Cristoforo del Chiugi: *Regestum reformationis comunis Perusii ab anno MCCLVI ad annum MCCC*, ed. V. Ansdei, 1 (Perugia, 1935), p. 141 (11 March 1260); Santa Maria Rossa: ASP, Archivio Storico del Comune di Perugia, Sommissioni, 2, fols 155v–156 (3 May 1261); ASP, Archivio Giudiziario, Capitano del Popolo, 1277, reg. 4, fol. 77v (8 September 1277).

³² ACS, perg. no. 588 (1324); Modena, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Segreto Estense, Archivio per Materie, Ordini Equestri, Commenda di S. Stefano di Reggio, busta 3, fascicolo segnato (6 February 1324); G. Ferri, 'Le Carte dell'Archivio Liberiano dal secolo X al XV', *Archivio della R. Società Romana di Storia Patria*, 30 (1907), 145–7; cf. in general, Luttrell (1978), no. VIII, p. 318.



Fig. 9.1 Perugia, San Bevignate: aerial view from the east

foundation of a female house under the Hospitaller Rule was agreed at Avignon on 1 September 1324; the pope gave his approval on 5 August 1325.³³

The Founder's Relations with the Papal *Curia* and their Local Implications

Even though the principal bureaucratic formalities were completed by 1325, there were unforeseen delays in setting up the house at San Bevignate. These were due solely to the Perugian authorities who demanded the local tax payable on the rural

³³ Text in Tommasi, 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate', pp. 69–77; L. Kern, 'A propos du Mouvement des Flagellants de 1260: S. Bevignate, de Pérouse', in *Studien aus dem Gebiete von Kirche und Kultur: Festschrift G. Schnurer* (Paderborn, 1930), pp. 43–4.

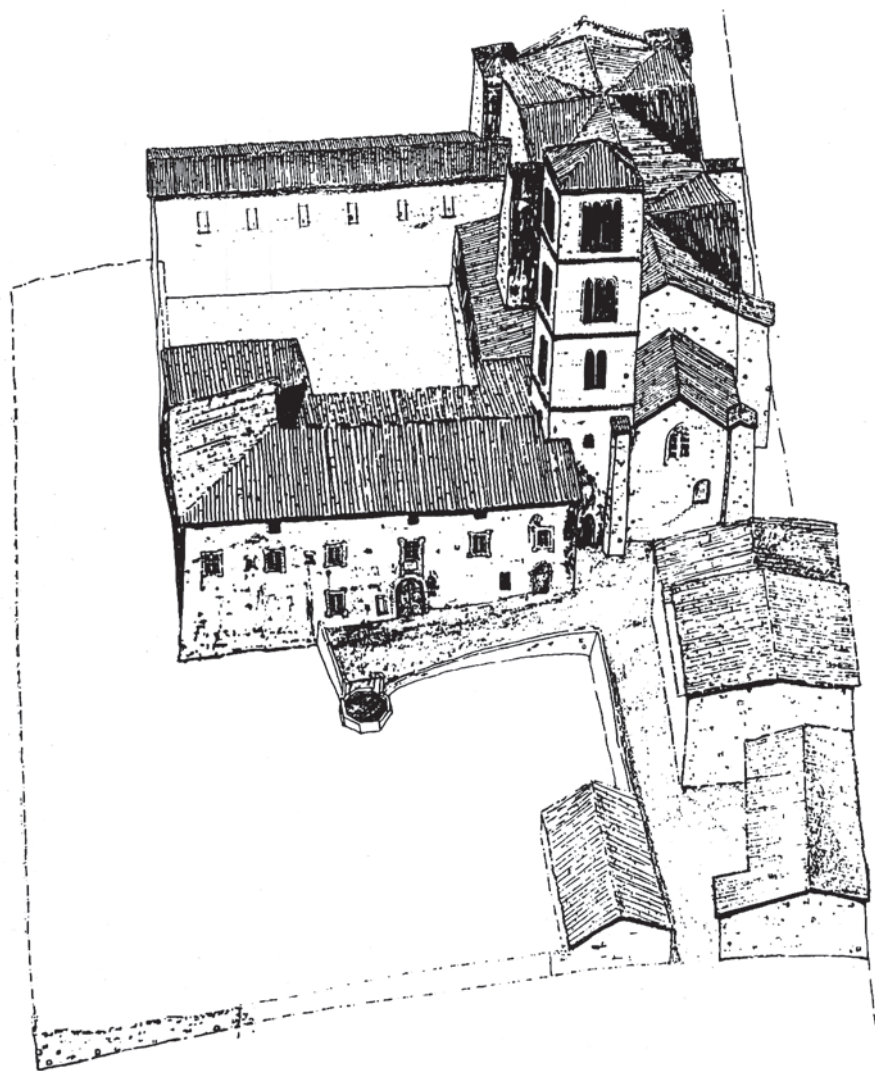


Fig. 9.2 Perugia, San Bevignate: reconstruction of the house during the Hospitaller period, viewed from the west

properties which Rico Corboli was purchasing in order to endow his foundation. In July 1327 John XXII had to request the Perugian magistrates to exempt the founder from the tax.³⁴ Possibly connected with this intervention was the visit to Perugia of the Hospitallers' Prior of Rome, Fr Pietro da Imola, which the pope had announced to the commune in June.³⁵

That Rico Corboli or another Perugian merchant like him³⁶ was in a position to persuade the pope to take such a personal interest in his devout initiative was due to his business position. Rico's fortunes derived from Perugia's political and economic situation during the late thirteenth century and the first decade of the fourteenth. Together with other cities in the papal patrimony, the Umbrian town had intermittently been the seat of the papacy on the eve of its transfer to Avignon in 1309,³⁷ a development that brought it many bankers and merchants who had dealings with the papal *camera*. Perugia also received significant economic benefits from its participation through the Guelph league of Tuscany in a major system of political and military alliances operating within the orbit of Florentine interests.³⁸ As a result, the great Florentine mercantile companies came increasingly to consider Perugia as a useful centre for their operations, and quite rapidly they established branches there which were managed by their own agents, some of them local recruits.³⁹ Among these companies, that of the Benci, of which Rico Corboli was a partner, was not among the most important, but the popes did use it on various occasions, although with some regularity only after 1316–17. Money changing and banking were closely linked and the line of demarcation separating the activities of the changer or *campstor* from those of the commercial agent or *mercator* was often obscured by the ambiguous terminology they employed.⁴⁰ That was true in the case

³⁴ Text in Tommasi, 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate', pp. 77–8.

³⁵ ASP, Archivio Storico del Comune di Perugia, Diplomatico, arm. 1, palch. 9, 78 (16 June 1327).

³⁶ For example, Francesco *Bartucii*, Rico's successor at the curia: Y. Renouard, *Les Relations des Papes d'Avignon et des Compagnies commerciales et bancaires de 1316 à 1378* (Paris, 1941), pp. 378, 380; below, p. 244, n. 51.

³⁷ F. Frascarelli, 'La Curia papale a Perugia nel Duecento', *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia: Università degli Studi di Perugia*: 2, *Studi storico-antropologici*, 16–17 (1978–80); on the *curiales*, A. Paravicini Bagliani, 'La mobilità della Curia Romana: riflessi locali', in *Società e istituzioni nell'Italia comunale: l'esempio di Perugia (secoli XII–XIV)* (Perugia, 1988).

³⁸ G. Degli Azzi Vitelleschi, *Le Relazioni tra la Repubblica di Firenze e l'Umbria nel secolo XIV*, 2 (Perugia, 1909), p. 18; *Consigli della Repubblica Fiorentina*, ed. B. Barbadoro, 1–2 (Bologna, 1921–30), *passim*.

³⁹ Y. Renouard, 'Le Compagnie commerciali fiorentine del Trecento', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 96 (1938), 48, 50, 54, 58, 60, 62, 64–7, 164–8, 175, 177–8.

⁴⁰ Renouard, *Les Relations des Papes d'Avignon*, pp. 366–8; cf. E. Göller, *Die Einnahmen der apostolischen Kammer unter Johann XXII* (Paderborn, 1910), p. 473.

of Rico Corboli who acted for his company in what were purely banking operations, lending money⁴¹ and receiving deposits.⁴²

The apostolic *camera* entrusted the exchange of monies to a group of important merchants resident in Avignon. The chief of these was Rico Corboli who between 1323 and 1331 was an important lender to the papal Curia.⁴³ However, the sale of goods was his most lucrative activity. Until 1320 his contacts with the *camera* were intermittent but during the following decade he was in permanent relations with it; acquiring the semi-official title of *mercator Romane curie*, he became a principal supplier of the papal court for every kind of merchandise: fine cloths, carpets, liturgical furnishings, jewels and precious stones, and metals.⁴⁴ From 1320 to 1321 Rico also managed the papal mint at Pont-de-Sorgues near Avignon, where at John XXII's request he coined papal florins in imitation of those of Florence.⁴⁵ These tasks which the papacy entrusted to the *probus vir*⁴⁶ demonstrated its recognition of Rico Corboli's qualities, his professional zeal and his loyalty. When the future emperor, Louis IV of Bavaria, entered Italy, Rico was one of the leading supporters of the Avignonese papacy, following the Guelph politics of Perugia.⁴⁷ That entailed risking his possessions in the papal patrimony, a punishment which was eventually imposed by the imperial anti-pope, Nicholas V, in September 1328.⁴⁸ Rico's allegiance presumably involved a similar attitude on the part of the house of San Beviniate of which he was *patronus*. This local development did not mean that the Hospitallers had any clear unequivocal position with regard to Nicholas V's election. The Order was divided over the question,⁴⁹ although not to the extent that it was later split by the papal schism of 1378 to 1417.⁵⁰

⁴¹ *Les Registres de Boniface VIII*, ed. G. Digard et al., 4 (Paris, 1939), no. 4244 (17 November 1301).

⁴² *Lettres Communes de Jean XXII (1316–1334)*, ed. G. Mollat, 16 vols (Paris, 1904–47), no. 5392 (15 July 1317); Göller, p. 286 (16 July 1317).

⁴³ Renouard, *Les Relations des Papes d'Avignon*, pp. 367–9.

⁴⁴ K. Schäfer, *Die Ausgaben der apostolischen Kammer unter Johann XXII* (Paderborn, 1911), *ad indicem* numerous references.

⁴⁵ Göller, p. 300; Renouard, *Les Relations des Papes d'Avignon*, pp. 407–8.

⁴⁶ Schäfer, p. 803.

⁴⁷ On Perugian policy, W. Heywood, *A History of Perugia* (London, 1910), pp. 140–50.

⁴⁸ All Corboli's goods were assigned to the anti-pope's marshal, Lando di Silvestro Gatti of Viterbo: *Lettres Communes de Jean XXII*, no. 46333 (19 September 1328); cf. G. Silvestrelli, *Città, castelli e terre della regione romana*, vol. 2, 2nd edn (Rome, 1940), pp. 747–8.

⁴⁹ On the Hospital's Ghibelline tendencies, Delaville, *Les Hospitaliers à Rhodes*, pp. 73–4; on the Commander of Modena, Fr Paolo da Spoleto, partisan of Louis IV, F. Bock, 'Studien zum politischen Inquisitionsprozess Johann XXII', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 14 (1911), 81, 83, 89–90, 94–5, 98–100, 105, 108; above, n. 48.

⁵⁰ Luttrell (1978), no. XXIII.

Administration, Recruitment, Episcopal Relations, *Cura monialium*

Many elements in the organization of San Bevignate were conditioned by its act of foundation or by the papal bull of confirmation which integrated and rectified certain points previously agreed between the founder and the Hospital's officers. The agreement made with the Master in the late summer of 1324 recognized to Rico Corboli and his kin a right of patronage which would be extinguished only on the death of the last surviving family member.

There was an initial period, not precisely definable,⁵¹ during which the internal organization of San Bevignate was to be determined by the exercise of the patrons' rights. Their principal prerogative lay in the choice of the house's members in the stricter sense, the *sorores conventuales*. It was an indispensable condition that the first *monialis* chosen to govern the community should belong to the Benedictine order or to some other order approved by papacy. The founders were to present their choice to the Master or to the Prior of Rome or, in their absence, to a lieutenant of one or other of them; on receiving proof of her suitability, he was to receive her into the Hospital and invest her with the title of abbess. Thereafter the patrons had within six months to choose aspirant Hospitaller sisters and to submit them for the approval of the newly chosen abbess.⁵² An identical procedure was to be followed in substituting one or more deceased sisters, except that the interval before the presentation to the abbess was to be of only three months. On the death of an abbess, the three patrons had a maximum of 90 days in which to inform the Master or the Prior of Rome of their choice as successor of one of the professed sisters; the local bishop was not involved. In normal conditions, that is in the absence of any restrictive conditions deriving from the *juspatronatus*, it was the abbess, acting with the sisters' consent, who would replace sisters who had died or had left the house. Once the patrons had lost their initial powers, the conventual chapter was to elect the abbess, although the Master and Prior of Rome would retain powers of control and supervision. Apparently it was not always the prioress, the second figure in the house's hierarchy, who replaced an outgoing abbess.⁵³ The office of abbess or

⁵¹ Rico's wife Caterina was dead by 7 July 1327: text in Tommasi, 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate', pp. 77–8. That Rico's position at Avignon had been taken by Francesco Bartucci in 1330 (Schäfer, pp. 257, 522) does not mean that he had died. Corboli's daughter was a minor, between 15 and 24 years of age, in 1324.

⁵² The 1324 arrangement foresaw the reception of the sisters, their vows made to a Hospitaller priest, followed by the election of one of them as abbess, but John XXII changed that.

⁵³ Some capitular acts listed sisters present by name without mentioning the prioress; sometimes the absence of documents prevents understanding of when a sister who later appeared as prioress first became prioress. Thus Franceschina *Vagnoççi* was a simple sister on 21 February 1393: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 40, fol. 18; on 3 March 1407 she was abbess: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 43, fol. 236. Andrea *Rafaelis* was a *soror* on 27 July 1481: *ibid.*,

*preceptrix*⁵⁴ was not held for life but had a fixed limit, possibly of two years, even if it could be renewed a number of times. An extreme case was that of Sister Criseide di Paolo, from the noble family of Montesperello, who was elected for two years in 1416 and remained in office until after 1467.⁵⁵

Two clauses in the *instrumentum publicum* agreed at Avignon in 1324 illustrated the powers of a bishop in relation to the Order during the early fourteenth century. One clause concerned the methods to be followed by the patrons in recruiting and receiving sisters, and the other regulated the bishop's power to make periodic visitations of the house. The position of the *ordinarius loci*, in practice the Bishop of Perugia, was very clear; he could not interfere in the choice, the presentation or the reception of the sisters, nor could he conduct a visitation at San Bevignate. The Hospitallers could rely on their papal exemption from episcopal jurisdiction.⁵⁶ At the Council of Vienne held in 1311 and 1312, during which Pope Clement V suppressed the Templar Order, he also agreed to a project for the reform of the Hospital, as demanded by Philip IV of France and by certain sectors of the clergy opposed to the Hospital's exemptions. The pope suspended for an indefinite period almost all the Order's privileges, including presumably its exemption.⁵⁷ Yet 12 years later the Hospital's juridical situation had returned to normal. Everything in the agreement of 1324 and indeed in its papal confirmation suggested that the Order considered that it should enjoy all its earlier privileges, in particular that

Bastardelli, 79, fol. 648; on 7 September 1493 she was abbess: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 548, fol. 70v. Criseide di Montesperello was prioress and ruled during a vacancy until 17 January 1416: *ibid.*, 74, fols 4v, 5. On the following day the chapter chose her as abbess: below, n. 55. Her successor and kinswoman Semidea di Guido *Morelli(!) de nobilibus de Monte Sperello* was prioress on 20 May 1467: *ibid.*, Bastardelli, 517, fol. 77; by 15 March 1469 she was abbess: ASP, Catasti I, 16, fol. 170v. On 22 May 1497 another Montesperello, Sister Felice di Averardo *Guidi Morelli*, was prioress: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 597, fol. 163v; on 20 March and 2 November 1506 she was abbess: *ibid.*, 609, fol. 3v; *ibid.*, 506, fol. 837.

⁵⁴ Text in Tommasi, 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate', p. 78. In Florence the superior was known as the 'commendatrice': Viviani Della Robbia, *Nei Monasteri*, p. 107. Penne and Sigena were governed by a prioress: CH, nos 4154, 4508; Agustín Ubieto Arteta, *Documentos de Sigena*, 1 (Valencia, 1972), *passim*.

⁵⁵ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 74, fol. 6v (18 January 1416); fols 18, 19 (10 and 12 March 1416); 141v (27 October 1417); ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, Ospedale di S. Maria della Misericordia, Bastardelli, 60, fols 7v (28 March 1421), 11v (8 April 1421), 47 (14 September 1421), fols 68v–69 (7 December 1421); *ibid.*, Protocolli, 109, fol. 258v (18 October 1434); 247, fol. 57 (1 September 1457); 324, fol. 76v (3 May 1465); *ibid.*, Bastardelli, 517, fol. 77 (20 May 1467).

⁵⁶ CH, no. 4858 (17 April 1309); Riley-Smith, p. 384.

⁵⁷ 'Item privilegia et sigilla Hospitalariorum preter privilegium exemptionis sunt suspensa. Item dicti Hospitalarii cum capellis suis et parochiis episcopis dyocesanis sunt subiecti': text in E. Müller, *Das Konzil von Vienne 1311–1312: seine Quellen und seine Geschichte* (Münster i. W., 1934), pp. 686, 651–2; *Le Dossier*, ed. Lizerand, p. 200.

of exemption. A comparison with the female house of San Niccolò dei Freri at Florence later confirmed the point, since there it was the Prior of Pisa, rather than the bishop, who was to control the sisters; in 1392 the 'anti-Master' Fr Riccardo Caracciolo 'wished and declared that the prior should be their superior and ordinary with full authority and jurisdiction to castigate, punish and correct them according to the occasion.'⁵⁸

Such privileges repeatedly caused tension and conflict between the Order and the bishop. The bishops for their part sought to exercise an authority over the Hospital, claiming ancient rights and powers over 'religions' exempt from their authority; their claims went beyond the sphere of spiritual jurisdiction, as demonstrated in a series of interferences in San Bevignate's internal affairs. The sisters refrained from seeking, or did not aspire to, an emancipation from the bishop's control; indeed on two occasions in 1481 they requested and secured from the bishop, through his vicar, an authorization to sell pieces of land,⁵⁹ while on one occasion the bishop's vicar functioned as an arbiter in a case between their house and secular persons.⁶⁰ As for the unexplained 'approval' given by the bishop to the creation of the house in 1325,⁶¹ if this did not involve a *munus benedictionis* then it should be noted that the abbess and sisters of San Bevignate received from the papacy the faculty of securing it *a quocumque maluerint episcopo*⁶² and not necessarily from the bishop of their own diocese.

The spiritual government of the sisters at San Bevignate occupied an important place in the agreement of 1324, as John XXII emphasized when he confirmed it. The sisters' confessions, the administration of the sacraments and everything connected with the *cura monialium*, together with other liturgical practices, were the responsibility of their chaplain. The choice and removal of the chaplain whenever they wished also fell to the patrons; with the extinction of their family, it too was to pass to the abbess and to the sisters in chapter. The acts of 1324 and 1325 showed that the choice and installation of a chaplain were subject to approval by a Hospitaller priest who was to be one of the rectors of the churches of San Benedetto di Cupa in Perugia, San Benedetto at Mugnano or San Giovanni di Pian del Carpine. The number of chaplains at San Bevignate was not rigidly fixed by the acts of foundation and could oscillate between one or two; in 1332 and 1333 there were, for

⁵⁸ Viviani Della Robbia, p. 107, with an edition of extracts from the monastery's chronicle written in the seventeenth century from authentic documents; archive references in *CH*, 1, p. ccxxvi.

⁵⁹ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 79, fols 788v, 790v (14 October 1481).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Protocolli, 247, fol. 57 (1 September 1457); 74, fol. 5 (17 January 1416).

⁶¹ V. Cavallucci (1700–87), *Annali della Chiesa perugina con le successioni cronologiche dei vescovi che la goverarono*, in Perugia, Biblioteca Dominici, MS A 64, p. 139, without citing sources.

⁶² Text in Tommasi, 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate', pp. 69–77.

example, at least two rectors or chaplains, Andrea and Giovanni, for the church of San Girolamo.⁶³

The sisters' economic resources could not provide their chaplain with his livelihood or the expenses of his servants, and he received no more than the expenses incurred in his liturgical activities. Given the sisters' *clausura*, the chaplain, in the early days at least, seems not to have lived in the house. In defining the form of the annual visitations, the 1324 agreement decreed that the two visitors, a Hospitaller chaplain from another diocese and the chaplain of San Bevignate itself, should not take with them more than three *familiares* and three horses; nor should they remain in the house any longer than strictly necessary.⁶⁴ The obligation to reside outside the house was not always respected; thus Antonio Masci, the sisters' chaplain, syndic and procurator, was living in the house at the latest by 1405.⁶⁵ The chaplains' origins are poorly documented, but there was an apparent preference for Benedictines such as Antonio Pavoncelli *de Cicilia*, Prior of San Niccolò di Virgiliano near Poggio, who was procurator of San Bevignate in 1394,⁶⁶ and the same Antonio Masci, Abbot of San Maurenzio at Fossombrone, active at San Bevignate during the first 20 years of the fifteenth century.⁶⁷

⁶³ *Rationes Decimarum ... Umbria*, ed. P. Sella, 1 (Vatican, 1952), nos 826, 863, 1107, 1675. In 1334 only a *dompnus Andreas* was mentioned: *ibid.*, nos 1795, 2357. The existence of an abbot in the ex-Templar Commandery of San Giustino d'Arno presumably resulted from Benedictine interference following the Templars' dissolution while excluding a Hospitaller presence: Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 14, 33 n. 57.

⁶⁴ A two- or three-day limit ('*visitatio ipsa duret per duos vel tres dies ad plus*') was decreed in 1291 for the Prior of Capua's annual visitation of the Hospital's female house at Penne; *CH*, 3, no. 4154. At Fieux, founded in 1297, a Hospitaller chaplain might, with the Master's licence, reside: *ibid.*, no. 4373.

⁶⁵ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 43, fol. 44v (1405); *ibid.*, 74, fols 18v, 19, 23 (1416).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 27, fol. 118 (4 September 1394); in June 1388 the procurator of San Bevignate was Ceccarello di Benvenuto: ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 169v.

⁶⁷ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 165, fol. 98v (6 September 1402); *ibid.*, Protocolli, 43, fol. 167v (4 August 1406), 236 (3 March 1407); 74, fol. 5 (17 January 1416), 6v (18 January 1416); ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresses, Ospedale S. Maria Misericordia, Bastardelli, 60, fol. 7v (28 March 1421), 10 (2 April 1421), 11v–12 (8 April 1421), 47 (14 September 1421), 68v–70 (7 December 1421); above, n. 65. Matteo *domini Tome* of Gubbio was the sister's procurator in July 1406: ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 172. Antonio Masci was procurator by 3 March 1407: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 43, fol. 236. By 15 January 1425 he was no longer procurator: ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 169v (15 January 1425).

The Sisters and their Endowment

San Bevignate's foundation act fixed the number of sisters at 25 plus the abbess; that did not include the donats, *conversi* and *famuli* whom, like other ecclesiastical houses, it maintained.⁶⁸ That number could not be increased nor decreased without special papal licence. That meant that Rico Corboli's endowment of 3000 florins was intended, together with their other possessions, to support 25 sisters. Any change in numbers theoretically implied a change in economic conditions. Pope Urban VI's instructions of 1381 to the Abbots of Santa Maria di Val di Ponte and of San Paolo di Val di Ponte and to the Prior of Sant'Angelo of Perugia to introduce the Perugian *puella litterata* Assalonna di Gabriele into the house seemed to obey that logic.⁶⁹ Throughout the fourteenth century the number of *sorores conventuales* seems to have undergone no significant change. The conventual chapter of 21 February 1393 was attended by 20 sisters, including the Abbess Andreola Pellini; a notarial act stated that they constituted two thirds of the entire convent.⁷⁰ Yet some 20 years later in 1416 only eight sisters were present in chapter and thenceforth that number changed little.⁷¹

Such a major decline could have been the result of some dramatic change to the endowment inherited from the Templars and from Rico Corboli,⁷² but there may have been other explanations. A crisis of vocations⁷³ was undoubtedly an effect

⁶⁸ Text in Tommasi, 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate', pp. 69–77. Before 1465 Paciola di Lello *Bey* and her husband Fantino di Nicola entered San Bevignate as oblates: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 324, fols 76v–77 (3 May 1465). On 4 August 1406 Petrucciolo di Angeluccio *Grelli* from Torranca (Assisi) received five florins for his salary as *famulus*: *ibid.*, 43, fol. 167v. On 3 May 1405 *domina* Vanna was named a *bisoca* of San Bevignate: *ibid.*, fol. 45. *Bisoca*, or beguine, was sometimes used for *mulieres familiares* and *consorores* of the military orders: K. Lampe, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschordensschwwestern', *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 16 (1967), 48, 51–2, 74, 78.

⁶⁹ Text in Tommasi, 'Il monastero femminile di San Bevignate', p. 78.

⁷⁰ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 40, fol. 17v.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Protocolli, 74, fol. 6v (18 January 1416). Eight sisters were at the chapter of 7 April 1421: ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, Ospedale S. Maria Misericordia, Bastardelli, 60, fol. 11v. On 20 May 1467 11 of 12 named sisters were present: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 517, fol. 77. Nine sisters were present on 27 July 1481: *ibid.*, 79, fol. 648. On 17 January 1495 16 sisters were present: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 390, fol. 16v. On 2 November 1506 five sisters were present: *ibid.*, 506, fol. 837.

⁷² Amend Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 39 n. 99, since the oldest *catasto* is not of 1397 but of c. 1361; the sisters did possess goods and properties which had belonged to the Temple.

⁷³ For two sisters leaving the house, the second passing to Santa Maria di Montelucente: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 43, fol. 236 (3 March 1407); *Memoriale di Montelucente* (Santa Maria degli Angeli, 1983), p. 10 (5 April 1449). On 3 May 1465 a married couple secured the invalidation of their *instrumentum obligationis*: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 324, fols 76v–77.

of war. In particular, the events of 1398,⁷⁴ which seriously damaged the walls at San Bevignate and forced its the sisters two years later to seek subsidies from the city, must have faced prospective entrants with a psychological deterrent. The devastating effects on religious houses outside the walls were evident, among other examples, at the Dominican convent at San Giorgio outside the Porta Sole whose sisters transferred themselves before 1420 inside the walls on account of the damages caused by a siege of the town and remained there.⁷⁵

Any reduction in the population of a religious house for other than economic reasons led to an improvement in living standards and material welfare for those who remained, and the sisters may have been tempted to claim economic difficulties as a reason either for reducing the number of new entrants admitted to the novitiate or to avoid potentially tiresome entrants. Even if the sisters did not adopt such policies, they may none the less have faced economic problems. Their financial situation was never particularly secure and, except at harvest time, they could, like many ecclesiastical institutions with predominantly rural incomes, be short of ready money; in certain circumstances that might have dramatic effects. It was not, however, for economic reasons, real or supposed, that San Bevignate was suppressed in 1506.

The reliance of San Bevignate on incomes derived largely from landed property created intricate problems which are difficult to analyse, given the unsatisfactory nature of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sources. For example, while it is reasonable to suppose that donations and bequests had consolidated the economic position of the Temple in the Perugian area,⁷⁶ it is impossible to give even an approximate estimate of their value. Of the agricultural lands or *predia* absorbed in the first half of the fourteenth century it is known only that they were acquired and bequeathed by Rico Corboli; there is no indication of their geographical distribution, and the contents of the earliest *catasto* or tax valuation of 1361 are largely lost. Eleven of the sisters' 12 plots of land recorded in the 1361 *catasto* were in the area of Bagnaia in the *contado* of Porta Santa Susanna; the twelfth piece adjoined the holdings at Pila.⁷⁷ The incompleteness of the records is demonstrated

⁷⁴ ASP, Archivio Storico del Comune di Perugia, Consigli e Riformanze, 45, fol. 71 (22 April 1400); 46, fols 95, 96 (21 June 1401); E. Ricci, *La Chiesa di San Prospero e i Pittori del Duecento in Perugia* (Perugia, 1929), pp. 37–8; A. Esch, *Bonifaz IX. und der Kirchenstaat* (Tübingen, 1969), pp. 326–8 (no. 267). In May 1517 the commandery buildings were occupied by the Duke of Urbino's troops attacking Perugia: Teseo Alfani, 'Memorie perugine dall'anno 1502 al 1527', ed. F. Bonaini et al., in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 16 part 2 (1851), 277.

⁷⁵ Perugia, Archivio del Monasterio della Beata Colomba, San Tommaso, Bolle, 2. Martial dangers induced other communities of sisters in the *rione* of Porta Sole at Perugia to move: Giovanna Casagrande, 'Insediamenti religiosi femminili a Perugia nell'Area Monteluca – San Bevignate', in *Templari e Ospitalieri in Italia*, ed. Roncetti et al., p. 50.

⁷⁶ Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 49, 53.

⁷⁷ ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fols 169v, 172.

by the absence among the properties listed as in the vicinity of San Bevignate of holdings which were in part known to have been held in Templar times.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Hospitaller contracts for sales and leases drawn up between 1393 and 1421 demonstrated the existence in the suburbs outside Porta Sole of lands and buildings which had presumably long formed part of San Bevignate's estates.⁷⁹ There was no trace of these in the 1361 *catasto* in which later alterations and additions registered as far as possible the house's holdings, yet the *castato* of 1498 assigned it almost eight hectares of property outside the Porta Sole.⁸⁰

San Bevignate's 1361 *catasto* began with properties at Bagnaia where its 16 hectares formed one of its more consistent concentrations of holdings. Despite changes across the years, the *castato* of 1498 and that of 1605–1607 confirmed that situation; apart from the properties at Villanova-Olmeto, those around Bagnaia were still more extensive than those elsewhere.⁸¹ That meant that the bulk of the sisters' lands lay south of Perugia in a quadrilateral formed by Bagnaia, Pila, Olmeto and Spina, and including Villanova. The Templars had held possessions in that area in the mid-thirteenth century, including a 'mill of Fra Bonvicino' on the 'river' Genna which must have been near Olmeto-Villanova where a watercourse, which is now a torrent, still worked a milling machine in the eighteenth century.⁸² Villanova, Olmeto and Spina were not listed in the 1361 *catasto* but contracts drawn up between 1421 and 1434 mentioned a number of lands held by San Bevignate in those places.⁸³

San Bevignate's interests in Bagnaia led to personal and business connections there, especially with one family. A branch of this family, named after a common ancestor called Nercoli, moved to Perugia and lived there in the parish of Sant'Antonio di Porta Sole. In 1417, in return for the expenses of planting a

⁷⁸ Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 39 n. 99.

⁷⁹ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 40, fols 17v–18v (21 February 1393); *ibid.*, Protocolli, 74, fols 4–5 (17 January 1416); ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, Ospedale S. Maria Misericordia, Bastardelli, 60, fols 7v–10 (8 April, 14 September 1421).

⁸⁰ 'Unum tenimentum terre laborative olivatum et vineatum cum domibus et monasterio in eo existentibus', with an area of 17 2/3 *mine*: ASP, Catasti, II, 35, fol. 79; by 1605–1607 the area had shrunk to 16 1/2 *mine*: Perugia, Archivio Diocesano [ADP], Catasti, Porta Sole, fol. 14.

⁸¹ Catasto del 1489: ASP, Catasti, II, 35, fol. 81 (Bagnaia), 79v (Villanova, Olmeto). Lands around Deruta are not here noted since most were late acquisitions: cf. below, p. 254, n. 112.

⁸² Tommasi, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 46. On the mills, F. Cavallucci, *Marsciano: Territorio e Nuclei Urbani: un'Indagine* (Milan, 1984), pp. 60–61, with eighteenth-century maps at p. 108; *Liber Contractuum (1331–32) dell'Abbazia Benedettina di San Pietro in Perugia*, ed. C. Tabarelli (Perugia, 1967), p. 267 (nos 368–78) *passim*; below, n. 83.

⁸³ Below, p. 253, n. 107; on 7 September 1426 Niccolò di Nino Nercoli, procurator of San Bevignate, leased a *cottimo* for seven years to Pietro They, inhabitant of the castle of Olmeto, a farm near Olmeto at a place named *la Costa*, bounded by the *flumen Gene* and by a road 'per quam itur ad molendinum'; ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 268, fol. 16.

vineyard, Vico di Nuzio Nercoli, his brothers Valentino and Niccolò, and his nephew Nercolo received from the sisters a piece of land to be held in usufruct for five years without rent.⁸⁴ From September 1426 at the latest until April 1461 another family member Niccolò di Nino Nercoli, acting as its syndic and procurator, managed all San Bevignate's principal business.⁸⁵ In 1435, for example, he sold to the representatives of the castle of Bagnaia a bell weighing ninety *libbre*; a larger bell, which substituted the other and was already in the tower at San Bevignate, carried the name of its donor, the Abbess Criseide Montesperelli, and of its two casters.⁸⁶ In 1472 the house recorded rural lands around Deruta sold to it by Niccolò di Nino for the considerable sum of 190 florins.⁸⁷ In 1495 Andrea Nercoli of Bagnaia was acting as the sisters' procurator,⁸⁸ and in 1501 Niccolò di Nino's son Ludovico, was also doing business with the sisters, from whom he held some land at Civitella d'Arno.⁸⁹

The *catasto* did not always identify the origins of a property. Notes added in 1406 to the 1361 *catasto* stated that the procurator had declared that the sisters held *casali* and lands at Castiglione Ugolino, at Pila-Bagnaia and at the castle of Fragnano by 'just title',⁹⁰ but it was not clear whether these were long-held properties or acquisitions rather than testamentary legacies or donations. A scattering of parcels of land obviously suggests bequests and gifts rather than planned acquisitions.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Ibid., Protocolli, 74, fol. 141v (27 December 1417); the *tenimentum* was at Valle del Monte 'in pertinentiis castri Bagnarie sive plani Pile'.

⁸⁵ He witnessed an act of 7 December 1421, together with the Abbot Antonio Masci: ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, Ospedale S. Maria Misericordia, Bastardelli, 60, fol. 68v. Niccolò was procurator by 7 December 1426: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli 268, fol. 15v. On 25 April 1461 he was still procurator: ASP, Catasti, 1, 16, fol. 170. The Perugian Gaspare *quondam* Luce was probably Niccolò di Nino Nercoli's immediate predecessor: *ibid.*, fol. 169v: 15 January 1425.

⁸⁶ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 785, fols 119v–122 (16 June 1435). The inscription read: 'AD MCCCCXXXV. FATTAM FVIT TEMPORE SORA CRESEDA BADESA HIC MONASTERIO. LUCA DE BONDI DA CORTONA E CRESCEMBENI DE PERUSIO ME FECERUNT': *L'Umbria*, 2 no. 16 (15 April 1916).

⁸⁷ ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 170v.

⁸⁸ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 390, fols 17 (17 January 1495), 297 (7 November 1495).

⁸⁹ ASP, Catasti, II, 35, fol. 80v.

⁹⁰ Ibid., I, 16, fol. 172; the same was true for some land, partly wooded, at Poggio San Silvestro (Colombella), where the *catasto* showed that in 1451 the sisters had held it for over 30 years: *ibid.*, fol. 170.

⁹¹ Luttrell (1992), no. XII.

Estate Management

In addition to its original endowment, donations formed an important part of San Bevignate's income. In 1388 the sisters received from *domina* Giondaresta Vannutoli, the widow of Giovanni Petioli, a *cassamentum* in Porta Sant'Angelo.⁹² A rich donation, registered in 1425,⁹³ from Stefano di Becco Tuti of single plots of land with rural buildings at Villa San Gricignano, Pantano and Castel Petrino increased existing holdings in those places.⁹⁴ Some lands and a *tenimentum* with buildings for agrarian use at Santa Lucia dei Colli and at Corciano, given by *domina* Bartolomea di Giacomo Cole, were registered in the *catasto* at the request of the sisters' procurator in 1459.⁹⁵ Two other pieces of land with a house and a well at Santa Lucia dei Colli and at Chiugiana from the same donor were registered in 1461.⁹⁶ A house in the parish of Santa Maria Nuova and some lands with a house at Monterone in the suburbs of Porta Sole, the gift of Martino di Nicola, were registered in the same year.⁹⁷

The generosity of donors was tempered by their economic possibilities, as was the size of the dowry paid by each sister at the moment of making her vows. At San Bevignate entrance contributions varied between a minimum of ten⁹⁸ and a maximum of 60 florins;⁹⁹ an intermediary sum of 30 florins was also recorded.¹⁰⁰ The dowry could take the form of cash or of goods which had been inherited or acquired by the *soror* before being handed over to the convent. For example, three pieces of land in the district of Montelabbate were transferred to San Bevignate before 1430 by an unidentified sister who was a niece of Cecco Bartoni,¹⁰¹ and the *petia* at Bagnaia acquired from Sister Angela di Matteo was registered in

⁹² ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 169v; a house in Porta Sant'Angelo (parish of San Cristoforo) 'que olim fuit Tomassi domini Vannis' was leased by the sisters for three years to Tino Grelli at eight florins a year: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 27, fol. 118 (4 September 1394).

⁹³ ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 169v.

⁹⁴ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli 165, fol. 98v (6 September 1402); *ibid.*, Protocolli, 74, fol. 18v (11 March 1416).

⁹⁵ ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 170.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ On leaving San Bevignate, Sister Vincenza of Città di Castello received back the ten florins she had paid on entry: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 43, fol. 236 (3 March 1407); cf. *ibid.*, 392, fol. 5 (4 January 1497).

⁹⁹ The 60 florins was from the 'dowry' of Giovanna di Nutarello di Pellolo Troni (entered before 1441), a part, ten florins, having been paid in land (*in tenutis*): *ibid.*, Bastardelli, 316, fol. 23 (17 June 1441).

¹⁰⁰ The sister was Giuliana di Bartolomeo Nigri: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 597, fol. 163v (22 May 1497); she was mentioned *ibid.*, 506, fol. 837 (2 November 1506), but was not at the conventual chapters of 17 January and 4 November 1495; *ibid.*, 390, fols 16v, 286.

¹⁰¹ ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 169v.

1438.¹⁰² As with the professed sisters, laymen or laywomen who associated themselves with San Bevignate made a direct gift or gave the house rights over a portion of their family inheritance.¹⁰³

San Bevignate's major incomes and its principal items of daily consumption depended on the proper administration of its lands. Relevant documents are scarce and never date before the fifteenth century, but the sisters' agrarian policy differed little from those of other local monastic houses which in the fourteenth century predominantly practised an indirect exploitation of their properties,¹⁰⁴ although in the early fourteenth century the Hospitallers' Priory of Rome preferred forms of direct exploitation in their agrarian activities in central Italy.¹⁰⁵ In the fifteenth century at least the sisters favoured forms of indirect cultivation. Fixed rents *a cottimo* and sharecropping or *mezzadria* constituted the two most frequent types of agrarian arrangement, although salaried *laboratores* or labourers were occasionally employed.¹⁰⁶ Most contracts recorded hirings for piecework lasting for a minimum of three to a maximum of 12 years, with annual payments almost always in kind. Of 27 contracts, copied in full or merely mentioned, which were drawn up between 1402 and 1506, 13 involved piecework,¹⁰⁷ three *mezzadria*,¹⁰⁸ one a long-term lease

¹⁰² Ibid. On 18 October 1434 Sister Angela (Nina di Matteo before her reception on 2 March 1410) sold to two private persons all the rights inherited from her deceased mother, Vige: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 109, fol. 258v.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 324, fols 76v–77 (3 May 1465).

¹⁰⁴ For San Pietro at Perugia, G. Mira, in *Liber contractuum*, p. viii; for Santa Maria di Monteluca, M. Rossi, 'Un'Indagine-campione sui Contratti agrari perugini del Trecento', in *Ricerche su Perugia tra Due e Quattrocento* (Perugia, 1981), pp. 151, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Luttrell, 'Les Exploitations rurales', pp. 112–13.

¹⁰⁶ A *Sensutius laborator* accustomed to work a piece of land (belonging to San Bevignate?) in the suburb of Porta Sole which bounded a small plot of land leased by the Hospital to a private person was mentioned on 17 January 1416: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 74, fol. 4v.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., fols 4v–5 (17 January 1416): a six-year lease of a piece of land in the suburb of Porta Sole and the annulment of the preceding contract: ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, Ospedale S. Maria Misericordia, Bastardelli, 60, fols 68v–70 (7 December 1421): five-year lease of all San Bevignate's goods around Spina, Olmeto and Villanova, which had in the past been leased *a cottimo*; ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 268, fols 15v–18 (7 September 1426): two seven-year leases of three farms at Olmeto; *ibid.*, Bastardelli 274, fols 13v–14v (14 August 1434): annulment of a twelve-year lease *a cottimo*; lease of some land at Spina for six years; in case of war the contract should not be *a cottimo* but at *mezzadria*: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 548, fol. 70v (7 September 1493): three-year lease of some land in the district of the castle of Chiugiana: *ibid.*, 551, fols 329–329v (16 December 1501): three-year lease of a farm at Villanova; *ibid.*, 435, fols 1034–1034v (3 September 1505): three-year lease *a cottimo* of all San Bevignate lands and agrarian buildings in the district of the castle of San Gricignano, one condition being that the *cottimatore* should live there: *ibid.*, 506, fol. 837 (2 November 1506): two-year lease of some land at Villanova; *ibid.*, 609, fols 3v–4 (20 March 1506).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., Bastardelli, 165, fol. 98v (6 September 1406); seven-year lease of all goods

lasting three generations¹⁰⁹ and one a special arrangement which brought in no rent since it was compensating the expenses of earlier improvements made to the land.¹¹⁰ The other nine contracts were sales.¹¹¹ Sales of land did not imply any crisis since they were balanced by purchases such as those made between 1429 and 1472 in the territory of Deruta for a total of 290 florins.¹¹² Apparently there was no serious reason, as there was in many other north Italian ecclesiastical houses,¹¹³ to speak of any progressive erosion of San Bevignate's holdings. Even when lands were sold, the sisters took care as far as possible to avoid the diminution of their overall endowment; they rid themselves of unproductive lands which were difficult to cultivate or inconveniently located.¹¹⁴

Sales almost always coincided with economic necessities of various types, whether fixed obligations or unpredictable expenditures. There was the life pension which the sisters had at their foundation assured the Benedictine Giovanni Giliucci; this payment derived from an agreement of 1303 which returned to the Templars the former Abbey of San Giustino d'Arno.¹¹⁵ There were the annual responsions due *in subsidium Terre Sancte* which even San Bevignate had to pay, although at a rate far lower than that owed by the richest commanderies; for example, 461 florins were paid in 1374 by Santa Trinità di Venosa. San Bevignate's modest contribution placed it among the small and medium commanderies of central Italy; those at Orte

around the *villa* of San Gricignano and Castel Petrino: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 396, fol. 236 (11 September 1501): three-year lease in *mezzadria* of all possessions in the district of the castle of Deruta: *ibid.*, 390, fol. 297 (7 November 1495).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Bastardelli, 517, fols 77–8 (20 May 1467): lease of a holding at Santa Lucia dei Colli.

¹¹⁰ Above, p. 251, n. 84.

¹¹¹ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 74, fol. 18 (10–11 March 1416): sale of land at San Gricignano; ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse, Ospedale S Maria Misericordia, Bastardelli, 60 fols 7v–10 (28 March–8 April 1421): sale of land in the suburb of Porta Sole; ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 79, fols 648v–649 (27 July 1481); sale of a piece of land near Villa Lupaccione; fols 788–789v (14 December 1481): two sales contracts for two pieces of land at Papiano: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 390, fols 286v–287v (4 November 1495); sale of land at Pilonico: ASP, Catasti, I, 16, fol. 170: sale (before 1461) of a holding at Corciano and of a small parcel at Santa Lucia; *ibid.*, II, 35, fol. 80v: sale (before 1501) of a piece of land at Civitella d'Arno.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, I, 16, fols 172 (1429), 170 (1472).

¹¹³ C. Cipolla, 'Une Crise ignorée: Comment s'est perdue la Propriété ecclésiastique dans l'Italie du Nord entre le XIe et le XVI siècle', *Annales E.S.C.*, 2 (1947); G. Chittolini, 'Un Problema aperto: la Crisi della Proprietà ecclesiastica fra Quattro e Cinquecento', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 85 (1973).

¹¹⁴ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 390, fol. 286v (4 November 1495): 'dictum monasterium sit pauper et pecunias habere non possit, nisi vendat aliquid ex bonis stabilibus dicti monasterii in locis minus dannosis'.

¹¹⁵ Text in Tommasi, 'Il Monastero femminile di San Bevignate', pp. 69–77; *idem*, 'L'Ordine dei Templari', 14–15, 17–18. This pension was deductible from the annual responsions.

and Viterbo paid five and 17 florins respectively in 1373.¹¹⁶ If the rule that the responsions were paid at the rate of one third of a house's income was really observed, the annual incomes of San Bevignate in the later fifteenth century would have been 30 florins. Ten florins was the amount paid to the priory in 1467¹¹⁷ and in successive years. The sisters could not always afford to repair their house or church, and in 1491 they covered that and future debts by ceding the income of a farm to the Prior of Rome for the rest of his life.¹¹⁸ The chief unforeseen expenses were caused by these periodic repairs. When the sisters did not pay for these themselves,¹¹⁹ the commune took over the financial burden, usually responding generously to the entreaties of the impoverished – *pauperrime* – residents.¹²⁰

The sisters' financial efforts were also directed elsewhere. Thus in 1416 they alienated to a private person a piece of land near the *villa* of San Gricignano for six florins because the rustic buildings at one of their nearby properties needed immediate repairs.¹²¹ Similarly in 1481 the chapter agreed to sell to two private persons two pieces of cultivable land at Papiano, gaining eight florins which were used to pay off the debts contracted on account of the long illness of Sister Innocenza di Bonifacio.¹²²

The Suppression

The sixteenth century was a dark period for female monastic foundations in Italy, with many houses in which the observance of the rule was in decay and moral

¹¹⁶ Luttrell, 'Les Exploitations rurales', pp. 114, 116.

¹¹⁷ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 517, fol. 74v (22 April 1467); on the responsions and other Hospitaller dues, Riley-Smith, *passim*.

¹¹⁸ ADP, F. Riccardi, *Ecclesiae dioecesis Perusie*, iv, *Porte Solis*, ms., p. 3. The notarial act which Francesco Riccardi, chancellor of the episcopal curia (d. 1694) consulted with other documents concerning San Bevignate when they were still in the diocesan archive (Lettera M.6); they were moved at some unknown time and are now, with all the others, in the Archivio Centrale del Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta [ASMOM] at Rome: Commende del Gran Priorato di Roma, S. Giustino di Perugia, busta Z.1.21.

¹¹⁹ For example, ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 390, fols 286v–287v (4 November 1495); ASP, Corporazioni Religiose Soppresses, Ospedale S. Maria Misericordia Bastardelli, 60, fol. 12 (8 April 1421), for church repairs.

¹²⁰ 'ipse moniales sint pauperes': ASP, Archivio Storico del Comune di Perugia, Consigli e Riformanze, 45, fol. 71 (22 April 1400); 'cum ipse pauperrime sunt et inhabiles ad predictos solvendos': *ibid.*, 122, fol. 38v (29 June 1493); above, p. 254, n. 114; cf. Paolo Raspa and Maurizio Marchesi, 'Note sull'architettura di San Bevignate', in *Templari e Ospitalieri in Italia*, ed. Roncetti et al., pp. 79–92.

¹²¹ ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 74, fols 15–15v (10–11 March 1416).

¹²² *Ibid.*, Bastardelli, 79, fols 788v, 790v (14 December 1481). On 7 January and 4 November 1495 Sister Innocenza *Bonifacii* attended chapter: *ibid.*, Protocolli, 390, fols 16v, 286v.

discipline far from satisfactory. This crisis affected even communities with ancient established traditions and exemplary practices; the popes and other ecclesiastical authorities could limit the damage only through reform or suppression.¹²³

The fate of the Hospitaller sisters was expulsion from San Bevignate and their return to the lay state, as recorded in a memorial drawn up for the Hospitaller Fr Paolo Barzi in the second half of the sixteenth century as evidence in a controversy over the control of the Commandery of San Bevignate. This document rehearsed, very briefly, the house's history from the time, wrongly given as 1308, when the Hospital inherited it from the Templars and Rico Corboli introduced the sisters to it. It stated laconically that the sisters 'continued until the year 1500' and were subsequently 'expelled by the Perugian people on account of their evil life and the monastery suppressed.' Furthermore 'the said commandery became vacant and remained vacant for a long time' until in 1506 Pope Julius II granted it to Benedetto Montesperelli on condition that he became a Hospitaller;¹²⁴ he was to follow a family tradition long adopted by many kinsmen and kinswomen.¹²⁵

This account of San Bevignate's suppression was roughly accurate,¹²⁶ although neither the abolition of the female community nor the provision of the house *in commenda* to Benedetto Montesperelli can have occurred before 1507, since at least until November 1506 Sister Felice di Averardo Montesperelli was ruling the house as its abbess.¹²⁷ San Bevignate was not the only Perugian female monastery to incur severe sanctions on account of its inmates' 'unrestrained' behaviour.¹²⁸ The accounts of events were too discreet for it to be certain that there had been public scandals such as those concerning the Cistercian nuns of Santa Giuliana whose

¹²³ P. Paschini, 'I Monasteri femminili in Italia nel '500', in *Problemi di Vita religiosa in Italia nel Cinquecento* (Padua, 1960).

¹²⁴ ASMOM, Commende del Gran Priorato di Roma, S. Giustino di Perugia busta Z.1.21; cf. Ricci, 36 n. 1; on the conclusion of the controversy, S. Siepi, *Descrizione di Perugia*, 2: *Annotazioni storiche*, 1, in Perugia, Biblioteca Augusta, MS. 3130, pp. 266–7 *et passim*.

¹²⁵ Hospitaller officers included Fr Francesco de Montesperelli, Commander of San Giovanni, Reggio Emilia, 1324: ACS, perg. 588; Fr Andrea da Montesperello, Commander of San Giustino d'Arno (Perugia), Santi Giacomo e Filippo di Mogliano and San Basso di Lauro (Fermo), 1417: G. Zippel, 'I Cavalieri di S. Giovanni di Gerusalemme a Roma', in *Atti del 1° Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, 1 (Rome, 1929), pp. 401–2; this Fr Andreas Cini de Montesperello was at Perugia in 1424: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 334, fol. 178; Fr Giovanni (di Ceccolo) da Montesperello, Commander of Santo Spirito at Recanati, 1430: *ibid.*, 564, fols 10v–11; by 1453 he was dead: Malta, Cod. 375, fol. 88v.

¹²⁶ Above, n. 124.

¹²⁷ Above, pp. 242–5, n. 53. Sister Felice's brother, the noble *Iohannes Ursus Averardi de Montesperello*, was procurator of San Bevignate in 1505: ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 435 (Ser Giacomo di Cristoforo di Giacomo), fol. 1034.

¹²⁸ A. Pantoni, 'Monasteri sotto la Regola benedettina a Perugia e dintorni', *Benedictina*, 8 (1954), 245, 254; below, p. 255, n. 129.

'goings on' attracted judicial interest in 1445¹²⁹ and even inspired a contemporary novel.¹³⁰

The decline of religious life in female convents is often ascribed to the hospitality given to grand ladies, especially when it led to dancing, feasting and convivial entertainment. Given the difficulty of preventing illustrious guests from receiving visitors and having outside contacts, lay people could enter the house and might disturb its cloistered calm.¹³¹ The chronicles recorded festivities at or near San Bevignate in 1471, when the abbess was almost certainly Suor Semidea di Guido Morelli da Montesperello.¹³² Ringarda, the daughter of the 'lord' of Camerino and future wife of Oddo di Carlo Baglioni, arrived on 7 June and 'stopped at San Bevignate with sixty horses brought from Camerino, and there she was visited with feasting by the company of Domanio and by the company of Sasso and by many other people'. Since two Montesperelli 'officials' of the Domanio company were kinsmen of Semidea, Ringarda's more or less brief stay at San Bevignate was presumably organized in advance by the abbess' powerful Perugian family which had long been predominant in the house.¹³³

Negligence on the part of the religious authorities whose duty it was to visit the house could further accelerate any degeneration of religious life. In France, for example, the Hospitaller sisters at Beaulieu suffered during the fifteenth century from the prolonged slackness both of the Priors of Saint-Gilles and of the Masters of the Order.¹³⁴ In the absence of any *visitationes* or other evidence concerning San Bevignate, it cannot be said whether the Priors of Rome or the chaplains encharged with conducting such visitations carried out those duties. A symptom of decline in female communities was the relaxation of the rule of enclosure. As in all other Hospitaller women's houses,¹³⁵ *clausura* was a basic rule and it had been explicitly prescribed in John XXII's bull of 1325. Yet at San Bevignate it was progressively abandoned during the fifteenth century, even if a document of 1493 suggested the contrary. In that year the sisters requested the Perugian commune to pay for the completion of a wall which they claimed to be important as it preserved their *clausura*; they stated that the wall was intended to prevent the entry of whoever

¹²⁹ 'Diario di Antonio dei Veghi dall'anno 1425 al 1491', in *Cronache della Città di Perugia*, ed. A. Fabretti, vol. 2 (Turin, 1888), p. 28.

¹³⁰ Probably located in this house was a novel by Agnolo Firenzuola (1493–1543): *Opere scelse di Agnolo Firenzuola*, ed. G. Fatini, 2nd edn (Turin, 1966), pp. 197–202.

¹³¹ Paschini, pp. 33–4.

¹³² Above, pp. 242–5, n. 53.

¹³³ *Diario di Antonio dei Veghi*, pp. 46–7; the two Montesperelli were Matteo Francesco and the abbess's brother, Nero di Guido Morello.

¹³⁴ Albe, 202.

¹³⁵ For example, *Rationes Decimarum Italiae: ... Aprutium-Molisium*, ed. Sella, no. 3392; *CH*, 3, no. 4154.

might enter 'without their consent'.¹³⁶ Probably San Bevignate again secured the commune's acquiescence to so laudable an intention.

Documents drawn up at San Bevignate suggest that the rule of *clausura* was not always as well maintained as the sisters pretended. Changes in the place in which legal acts were drawn up and in the physical location of the sisters conducting business suggested not so much that they completely failed to obey the rule but rather that they discontinued its observance. Notaries, clients and witnesses were not always rigorously separated from the sisters. Normally the notary and others acted *ante gratam ferream*, that is in front of the iron grille fixed in the floor close to the high altar of the church, while the nuns were at a due distance inside the grating, *intus dictam gratam*.¹³⁷ During the fifteenth century a free interpretation of the rule of *clausura* became more frequent,¹³⁸ leaving the sisters far from the *sufficiens et bona clausura* decreed by Pope John XXII in 1325.

¹³⁶ ASP, Archivio Storico del Comune di Perugia, Consigli e Riformanze, 122, fol. 38v (29 June 1493).

¹³⁷ For example, ASP, Archivio Notarile, Bastardelli, 53, fol. 44v (14 December 1394); ASP, Archivio Notarile, Protocolli, 74, fols 4v (17 January 1416), 18 (10 March 1416), 18v (11 March 1416), 19 (12 March 1416), 141v (27 December 1417); 109, fol. 258v (18 October 1434); *ibid.*, Bastardelli, 517, fol. 77; 79, fol. 648 (27 July 1481): 'Actum in ecclesia monasterii Sancti Bevegnatis ... iuxta gratam ferream existentem in dicta ecclesia et altare magnum dicte ecclesie, videlicet ante parlatorium dicti monasterii, in qua solitum est dictum capitulum congregari': *ibid.*, Protocolli, 43, fol. 236 (3 March 1407): 'Actum in claustro ecclesie Sancti Benvegnatis.'

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 390, fol. 286v (4 November 1495); 597 (Mariano di Petruccio), fol. 163v (22 May 1497); 609, fol. 3v (20 March 1506).

Index of Names and Places

This selective index concentrates on items relevant to the Hospitaller Order but omits many names, for example those of some sisters at Sigena, of many Frisian brethren, of donats in Provence and so on. For specifically Hospitaller entries, ‘sor’ and ‘prss’ indicate sister and prioress (or abbess); ‘fr’ a brother; ‘com’ and ‘cmy’ a commander and commandery (or preceptor and preceptory); ‘pr’ and ‘pry’ a prior and priory. Saints’ names are listed separately under ‘Saint’.

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